

## Bible Study: The Three Visitors

*<sup>1</sup> The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

*<sup>3</sup> He said, 'If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant.'*

*'Very well,' they answered, 'do as you say.'*

*<sup>6</sup> So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. 'Quick,' he said, 'get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.'*

*<sup>7</sup> Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.*

*<sup>9</sup> 'Where is your wife Sarah?' they asked him.*

*'There, in the tent,' he said.*

*<sup>10</sup> Then one of them said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.'*

*Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?'*

*<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Will I really have a child, now that I am old?" <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.'*

*<sup>15</sup> Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, 'I did not laugh.'*

*But he said, 'Yes, you did laugh.'*

*<sup>16</sup> When the men got up to leave, they looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.*

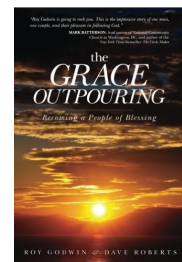
Genesis 18:1-16 (NIV)

Hospitality in the Middle East was and is very important. It would be an insult to the community if hospitality was not offered. Certain acts like washing of feet, were a sign of acceptance of people at face value. Rest and relaxation would be part of the hospitality along with a meal. On leaving there should be peace between host and visitor

- How did Abraham show hospitality? (cont. over page)

### Non-Fiction Book

- **THE GRACE OUTPOURING: BECOMING A PEOPLE OF BLESSING**



Roy Godwin & Dave Roberts

Roy and his wife Daphne Godwin have been at Ffald-y-Brenin Retreat Centre near the Pembrokeshire coast of Wales for almost ten years. In that time, they have seen God's power break through into the lives of visitors from all over the world.

### Fiction Book

- **A LINEAGE OF GRACE**



Francine Rivers

Five stories in one volume. These are stories about five unlikely women in Jesus' family line who challenged and changed the World.

- Who are the three visitors?
- How does Abraham show acceptance?
- Is it significant that in v10 the voice becomes that of 'The Lord', and what does this say to us?
- Hebrews 13:2 says 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' How could this verse help us to think about fellowship in a different way?

Often the three visitors are considered to be the Trinity.

The idea of fellowship with God is also an important one. In Philippians 3:10 St Paul says: 'My goal is to know Him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to his death'. In 2 Corinthians 13:13 St Paul also says that we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit – words which we regularly say in the words of The Grace.

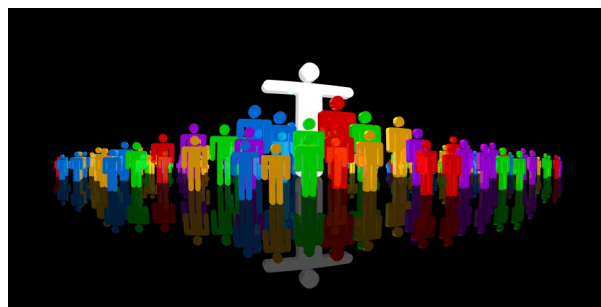
How do we see our fellowship with God? What does it entail, and why is it important?

What are the key aspects of our fellowship with each other?

## Fellowship groups / connect groups at church

Here's how Alister McGrath describes fellowship in The New Lion Handbook, Christian Belief:

'Doing things and having things in common with the Christian community. The emphasis is on shared participation rather than on common membership or meeting together.'



Being in a group, talking together, praying together, studying together can help the sense of fellowship, but so can having a meal together, having tea or coffee together. Many also find and make a common, strengthening link by serving together to help other people. All this and more can help fellowship, a sense of common 'belonging' to develop and grow.

As a church, we believe that faith is best lived out with others and so encourage individuals to join a small group. Methodism has repeatedly affirmed the way in which small groups can enrich an individual's faith. We call our groups "Connect groups" and are pleased to have groups that vary in style and approach but all aiming to build each other up and help each other grow in faith.

Are you already a member of a group or is there one you could try?

Is Christ the focus or have the groups become insular? Are newcomers really welcome?

Is there a new group you could help start?

## For Personal Reflection from Andrew Roberts

The writer to the Hebrews urges us to not stop meeting together. With whom are you meeting regularly intentional fellowship? Who might you invite to join you? Do you need to be part of or form a new group?

With whom do you struggle to share fellowship? Pray for God's grace to bring renewal to any difficult relationships.