

Greeting One Another

Lesson 2

Paul told the Christians in Philippians 4:21, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus...". When we are expecting that our brothers and sisters in Christ are getting ready to come together for worship and mutual edification, we should be excited about the assembly and be ready to greet each one that attends. In addition to this, when a guest from the community assembles with us, we should be highly motivated to make a positive lasting impression. Will Rodgers once said, "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression." Most of the time when guests leave the assemblies of a local church, they feel like an outsider, stating that the members were unified and loving toward one another, but it was hard for them to feel welcome. We are to heed the words of Jesus, when He said in Matthew 5:47, "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing {than others?} Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" While greeters may be appointed to guarantee that someone is standing ready to serve in this capacity, every member of the local church must be willing to help create a warm and welcoming environment.

The greeting is always something that must precede every other action taken by the congregation. Greeters should arrive early enough to greet everyone that attends. It is said that a guest will form their opinion about any local church within the first thirty seconds to three minutes of being present in their meeting place. Most local churches not only struggle to greet those in attendance effectively, but they fill the first five minutes of the assembly with announcements and other preparatory remarks that do not pertain at all to making a guest feel welcome. To show you the importance of prioritizing the greeting, consider what James said in James 2:1-5,

"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with {an attitude of} personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world {to be} rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"

While this passage certainly has a lot to say about being partial to certain guests, the point that we want to view is: it does matter how we treat our guests from the time that they come in to our assemblies. Don't show favoritism to class, race, age, or any other distinction among those who make up an assembly, week after week. It is easy to greet someone that you are familiar with; someone who thinks, acts, talks, looks or has the same interests as you. It is difficult to open up to a new person that you have never met before and or you are unfamiliar with. Don't let fear stand in your way. Go out of your way to take the clearest path to the guest, introduce yourself and welcome them to the assembly. Near the end of the service, be sure to take a moment to invite them back again. If you feel like you have connected with a guest, be the one who introduces them to another member of the local church.

The goal is to create relationships and to establish rapport with every person that attends the assemblies of the local church. Without this, a congregation will be marked as cold and unfriendly. Once this happens, it is so hard to recover. Keep this in mind in every assembly.

Let me repeat that this is a congregation-wide responsibility. Many brethren assume that the work of meeting and greeting is solely for those in leadership. While it is important that the leaders are involved in this way, some guests simply cannot bring themselves to immediately connect with those who are in these positions. Often these men are viewed in the religious world as clergyman or theologians. This tends to threaten a new guest in any local church. While in the Lord's church, hierarchy distinctions do not exist, we must become all things to all men that we might save some. We need to meet our guests where they are and then help them to become what God intended. Every guest that attends an assembly will usually be able to find someone present in the congregation with whom they share common interests. This is an immediate opportunity to build a warm bridge of relationship with our guests. But the only way that this scenario can come to pass, is if all members are making themselves available to meet and greet our guests.

What kind of greeting are we discussing when we speak of greeting those that are brethren or those that are guests from the community? Most of you, who are familiar with Paul's admonition, "greet one another with a holy kiss", in II Corinthians 13:12 have grown uncomfortable thinking about having to kiss every person that walks through the doors of our meeting place. It should be understood that in eastern cultures it is traditional to kiss both sides of the face when greeting someone. While this is not true of every place in the eastern part of the world today, it was very prevalent in the first century. While some cultures continue this practice, most have changed to a hug, handshake or a heartfelt "hello". These modes of greeting are more fitting in our culture.

In our day and time, we must use discretion with the way that we approach and greet those who assemble with us. Remember that Paul said it was a "holy" greeting. Keep that in mind as we deal with greeting "one another". A kiss given to the wife of one of our guests may leave you serving the rest of the day with a fat lip or black eye. Be careful and use wise judgment.

Our society struggles with greetings today. It is not uncommon to see someone walk by you and say, "hi, how are you" and then continue on their path without waiting for an answer. How bizarre is it that people would be so insincere that they would begin to communicate with you, but be unwilling to allow you to continue the dialogue? While this is not a communications class, the least we can do is be authentic and sincere in our service of greeting and welcoming others.

Let us read another one of Paul's more familiar greeting passages in Romans 16:3-16,

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also **{greet}** the church that is in their house. **Greet** Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. **Greet** Mary, who has worked hard for you. **Greet** Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. **Greet** Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. **Greet** Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. **Greet** Apelles, the approved in Christ. **Greet** those who are of

the {household} of Aristobulus. **Greet** Herodion, my kinsman. **Greet** those of the {household} of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. **Greet** Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. **Greet** Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. **Greet** Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. **Greet** Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. **Greet** Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. **Greet** one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ **greet** you.”

Indeed, greeting was an act that was very important to the apostle Paul. I don't believe that because Paul concluded his letters with a greeting or with admonitions to greet others that we should assume that the greeting is to be postponed or delayed for a time of departure. Rather, it would be more likely that Paul closed with these words so that the brethren reading the letters would remember to fulfill these greetings as soon as possible, having heard them at the close of each letter. The following passages exhibit other places where Paul spoke of saints greeting one another:

1 Corinthians 16:19-20

“The churches of Asia **greet** you. Aquila and Prisca **greet** you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren **greet** you. **Greet** one another with a holy kiss.”

2 Corinthians 13:13

“All the saints **greet** you.”

Philippians 4:21b-22

“All the saints **greet** you, especially those of Caesar's household.”

Colossians 4:15

“**Greet** the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.”

1Thessalonians 5:26

“**Greet** all the brethren with a holy kiss.”

2 Timothy 4:19

“**Greet** Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.”

Titus 3:15

“All who are with me **greet** you. **Greet** those who love us in {the} faith. Grace be with you all.”

Other writers in the New Testament also recorded similar exhortations to extend a greeting:

1 Peter 5:14

“**Greet** one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.”

2 John 1:13

“The children of your chosen sister **greet** you.”

3 John 1:14

“...but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace {be} to you. The friends **greet** you. **Greet** the friends by name.”

There are a few more things that we must keep in mind as greeters. After looking at 3 John 1:14, where John says, “Greet the friends by name”, it is clear that you would have to know these names in order to do this effectively. One other role that a greeter will have is to make sure that every guest receives a guest card to fill out. This card will request information that will be helpful to us in recalling who our guests were in the future. Tell them to drop this card in the collection plate when it is passed. This will not only alleviate the uneasiness that many guests have about giving monetarily during the offering, but it will guarantee that this information is secured by a member of the church before any guest departs. This information should be recorded so that we can use the data later to help us build stronger relationships with those that we come in contact with in our assemblies. Other items may be offered during the greeting, such as a copy of the Bible or a congregational bulletin, but the primary objective is to get to know our guests better. Make yourself available for any questions that a guest might have and know the answers to the best of your ability. If you have to take notes and ask someone, do it in a timely manner. Once the assembly is over, a process should begin to follow up with our guests based upon what we know about them and their needs.

There have been a lot of good brethren that have served as a greeter in the local church but they have confused or angered a guest by what they have said or what they have done in trying to be helpful. There have been countless stories told about greeters turning away a guest before they ever sit down in the assembly. One day a preacher was waiting in the foyer of a little country church. A man came in through the door, and the preacher said, “Hello and welcome”. The man shook his hand and said respectfully, “Good morning, Reverend”. The preacher responded, “Don’t you call me Reverend! The Bible says in Psalm 111:9 that God’s name is holy and reverend.” Was he right in what he said? Yes and no. While he had his facts straight, he just reprimanded a guest that had no idea what this church was all about. The man left hurt because he thought he was showing respect to the preacher, and the preacher responded harshly without ever giving the man a chance. The preacher should have said, “My name is _____ and you can just refer to me that way. And your name is...?” You get the point? Remember that your primary service is to make our guests feel welcome. Don’t use the foyer to fix our guests. Be friendly and let the word of God and the love of Christ that we exhibit through our assemblies make the difference. Make sure that you smile and share the joy of your faith, but also remember to listen and answer the questions of our guests appropriately.

Our greetings to one another as Christians are truly special. Our warm welcomes to our guests are a sign of appreciation that they have shown an interest in spiritual things. Our greetings should be viewed as unique. No one should be any more friendly and loving than the family of God. Will you do your part in creating a warm welcoming atmosphere for all of our brethren and those in our community who come to visit with us? Let us all be dedicated to this area of service when we come together for our assemblies.

Name: _____

Date: ____/____/____

QUESTIONS

Who said, "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression"? While this is not biblical, is it true?

Do you believe that greetings are really that important?

Explain how James 2:1-5 illustrates the importance of greeting all who are in attendance.

What three modes of greeting that begin with the letter "H" are more appropriate forms of greeting than the "holy kiss", in our culture?

In I Corinthians 16:19-20, how did Paul say that Aquila and Prisca greeted the saints at Corinth? How does this affect the way that we greet one another?

Is it possible to greet someone without being in their presence? Think about the method that Paul used to send greetings. Can we use this method today?

Do you feel comfortable serving as a greeter when we assemble together? Why or why not?

Are there any circumstances that would forbid us from extending a greeting to another person? See 2 John 9-11.

Based on this lesson, what is the main role of a greeter besides welcoming those who assemble with us? Why is this responsibility so important?