

Preacher's Penpoints

“Greet One Another”



Perhaps it seems strange to you that saying “hello” to someone would have a part in being a disciple of Jesus. Yet, something as simple as a greeting may reflect an approach to people that expresses either love or hate, good will or animosity, acceptance or rejection.

The New Testament is filled with greetings. Paul, in his letters, often singled out acquaintances to encourage by a simple greeting and a statement of their contribution to the cause of Christ (Romans 16:3-15). Similarly, he promoted a familial spirit among disciples throughout the world as he passed the greetings of one church to another (1 Cor. 16:19-20). Both Paul and Peter by the Holy Spirit made greeting others one of the many characteristic expressions of “one another” reciprocity. Disciples were urged to “greet one another with a kiss of love” (1 Pet. 5:14) and “with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20). These commands urge believers to use this intimate gesture not as an occasion to express impure thoughts, but as an acknowledgment of the holy and loving family that Christians are. Today, perceptive disciples will see the importance and value of implementing these principles in our own cultural gestures of good will and love.

Greeting others matters!

Greeting others helps forge close and lasting relationships with our brethren. It acknowledges them as part of the family. It says, “I recognize you; I care about you”. A warm smile, a hearty handshake, and friendly greeting say, “I want to know you better, to become your friend”. Withholding a greeting may say the opposite. All of us have experienced the disconcerting feeling that someone has snubbed us. And who hasn’t experienced the pain of being intentionally sent a message by being given an icy stare or the silent treatment?

Greeting others is especially important in evangelism. Church growth specialists affirm that many newcomers to our assemblies may make the decision about whether they will return to another service on the basis of how they are received in the first ten minutes of their visit. In such a setting, a congregation’s attention to greeting others becomes a matter of paramount importance. Every disciple should be encouraged to see greeting visitors as an important part of his work while at the assembly. It may be the first step in a sequence of events that ultimately leads to the conversion of the lost who come in among us.

Greeting others is important in keeping new members. New converts especially need to be encouraged by our greetings! Often disciples in congregations have created circles of association that exclude new members. These exclusions will inevitably foster hurt in those who feel rejected and isolated, and cause them to be discouraged. Instead, realize that enfolding new members is an important step in retaining them. At the critical time, when new converts are feeling isolated from worldly friends because of their decision to serve the Lord, they desperately need new friends to welcome them into their lives. I wonder how many new converts have fallen away because no one really wanted to get involved with them? Nothing is sweeter to a man than the sound of his own name. Greet your brothers by name and know that you will make them feel special and important to you and that they are a part of the family where you worship.

Let me urge you to make greeting others a life-long habit and the first step toward deeper and abiding relationships of love with both members and visitors. In this world of isolation and detachment, it would be hard to estimate the power of an entire church of sincere greeters!
—Johnny