

Cultivating Covenant Community
A Study of the One-Another Commands of Scripture

Lesson 4: Greet and Welcome Another

Key Scriptures: Philippians 4:21; 1 Peter 5:14; Romans 14:1—15:7

At Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, James Montgomery Boice would open the morning worship services with these words:

*“To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest,
to all who mourn and long for comfort,
to all who struggle and desire victory,
to all who sin and need a Savior,
to all who are strangers and want fellowship,
to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
and to whoever else will come,
this church opens wide her doors
and offers welcome in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1. Greet One Another

- a. **What is a greeting?**
 - i. A Christian greeting is a personal word of welcome to another Christian. The greeting includes invoking the person’s name and pronouncing God’s blessing.
- b. **Does the Bible provide any cautions about greetings?**
 - i. When it would needlessly endanger you (Luke 10:4).
 - ii. When it supports false teaching or other kinds of evil (2 John 10-11).
 - iii. When it is a cloak for doing evil (Matthew 26:49).
 - iv. When it would be an act of pride (Matthew 23:7).
- c. **Does the Bible provide any guidance about how to greet others?**
 - i. We should greet every saint (Philippians 4:21).
 1. “An alone person in our gatherings is an emergency.”
 - ii. We should live in harmony with one another. We should not be haughty but associate with the lowly (Romans 12:16).
 1. James 2:1-7
 - iii. We should greet one another by name (3 John 15).
 1. We should be intentional about learning names. Consider Romans 16:1-16!
 2. “A Place Where People Matter”
 - iv. If possible, we should include appropriate physical affection in our greeting (Romans 16:16; 1 Peter 5:14).
 - v. We should invoke God’s blessing on others. Paul’s greetings always pronounced God’s grace and peace on the recipients.
 - vi. We should welcome strangers (Matthew 25:35).
 1. Invite, introduce, include

- d. How can I do better at greeting others? Have I become so set in my ways that I am missing an opportunity to bless others? Do I only greet my friends? Have I used my personality as an excuse for disobeying God's command to greet every saint?

2. Welcome One Another

- a. Romans 14:1—15:7
- b. Key principle: **we love and welcome one another in the body of Christ when we respect the various personal convictions in the church.**
 - i. God calls us to welcome one another when we disagree on secondary matters.
- c. Context: The church in Rome was going through a cultural change. . .
 - i. "The strong" vs. "the weak"
- d. John Stott on the meaning of the Greek word for "welcome" (ESV) in Romans 14:1:

"Proslambano means more than to 'accept' people, in the senses of acquiescing to their existence, even in their right to belong; more even than to 'receive or accept in one's society, into one's home or circle of acquaintances' (BAGD). It means to welcome into one's fellowship and into one's heart. It implies the warmth of kindness and of genuine love."
- e. **What does it look like for us to welcome one another when we disagree on secondary matters of deep personal conviction?**
 - i. **Do not quarrel about the differences** (14:1).
 - 1. John Stott: "In other words, we are not to turn the church into a debating chamber, whose chief characteristic is argument, still less into a lawcourt in which weak persons are put in the dock, interrogated and arraigned. The welcome we give them must include respect for their opinions."
 - ii. **Do not despise one another** (14:2-3).
 - 1. John Murray: "the smile of disdainful contempt" and "the frown of condemnatory judgment" are both to be avoided.
 - iii. **Do not pass judgment on one another** (14:4-12).
 - 1. Each believer is responsible for his own conscience and will give a personal account to the Lord.
 - iv. **Do not put a stumbling block in the way of a brother** (14:13-23).
 - 1. A "stumbling block" in this context acting in such a way that you pressure your brother to go against his conscience.
 - a. For example, let's say another Christian believes that it is wrong to watch all R-rated movies. If you pressure him into watching an R-rated movie that you think is fine, then you are encouraging him to act against his conscience. You are not "welcoming him" in the Lord.
 - v. **Seek to please others and not yourself** (Romans 15:1-7).
 - 1. "Seeking to please others" in this context is seeking to build them up in the Lord. It is not sinful people-pleasing.
- f. What are some contemporary examples?

- i. It can be difficult to make contemporary applications because the first-century Christians were living in a unique time.
- ii. It can also be difficult because no one wants to concede the point that they are the “weaker” brother!
- iii. But the principles of this chapter could apply to a variety of issues that keep us from welcoming one another in the body of Christ. . .