

Welcome

As it affects drawing visitors to the Church.

Accepting one another

On a personal (intercourse) level

What did your parents teach you?

Please - Thank You - You are Welcome

Bitte - Danke - Bitte

I watched an interview on TV yesterday and noticed that this cycle has been corrupted by news media. They invite a guest and ask questions. At the end they say an insincere "Thank you" and they get one back.

Just what does it mean to say "you are welcome" or to make someone feel welcome?

Examples of Welcome in our experience

The host or hostess at a successful restaurant

The Wal-Mart greeter (note that the greeter is different)

The reason for this sermon is that this week I have been intently interested in the welcome a congregation in another city gives a friend of mine who has moved there.

He has realized that Calvinism is not consistent with the Bible and is searching.

Because he is seeking, study will come, but first he needs connection.

Being made to feel welcome will have more effect on him than the sermon will.

You cannot feed him truth if he doesn't come back.

Welcome makes a difference.

Many of you take a turn at being a greeter on Sunday mornings. Others make a point to meet anyone they don't know who comes here. Sometimes we make a point to get everyone up on their feet and greet someone else before the sermon begins.

In the words of our President we mis-estimate the value of this welcoming.

Sometimes I have to travel for my work. The churches I remember are the ones who welcome me.

In Mannheim - Shirley Seal would grab you a squeeze you when you walk in the door.

And when I go back John Davis remembers and welcomes me though he only sees me every year or two now.

In Wickenburg AZ the Suppan family took me home for lunch and spent most of their afternoon with me. They told me that since I had Valley Fever they considered me a resident.

In Laredo TX a family saw me all by my lonesome and said come on with us. And away we went to Luby's.

In Pitman NJ every visitor was personally greeted by several different men who wore a matching shirt with a fish embroidered above the pocket. It was obvious that they got up and prepared themselves to greet visitors that day.

In Centerville Mo, they asked me to share a message with them.

In Faith SD, they welcomed me with a hot cup of coffee and treated me like a long lost friend. We went to see Justin and Melissa Vig, but we had been thoroughly welcomed before they showed up.

... Which churches have you visited that made that impression on you?

"WE ARE GLAD YOU CAME!"

I am not telling you this because you don't already know it or because I am good at it.

I am telling it because I want to encourage many of you in what you are doing.

I warned Dave Ingle that I would talk about him. This is one of the things I see him doing every time we come together. I see Carole Seufferlein doing it.

It is great to be Biblically sound in our doctrine and effective in teaching, but the simple fact is that you can't reach someone who does not come back.

Feeling welcome will do more to make someone want to come back than anything else we can do.

The word "welcome" in your Bible comes from one of several Greek words that come from the same root word that is also translated "accept" or "receive".

In Luke 8:40 the Bible says that the people welcomed Jesus when he returned to the area around Capernaum.

In Acts 15:4 the Bible says that when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem the Church "received" them.

Sometimes the Bible does not say that someone was, welcomed, received or accepted. The story tells that this is what happened. E.g. Luke 7:36 ff tells of a sinful woman who came to Jesus. Jesus accepted her.

Simon the Pharisee in whose house Jesus was put off because he would not have done so.

Simon expected to influence the lives of sinners by being a perfect example of how he thought people should live.

Accepting people who did not meet his standards was unthinkable to Simon.

He could not understand why this man Jesus, accepted people he regarded as unacceptable  
He could not understand what he had such influence upon them.

Jesus accepted us – to the point of dying for us – while we were unacceptable. (Rom 5:8).

**Romans 5:10** <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

James 2 – Expounds on this theme and tells us we should not show partiality. I.e. we should not accept someone just because they look the part we would like them to.

In sales and public relations, jobs my Father used to refer to as “meeting the public”, people are chosen to be in contact with customers based on how they look.

One might argue that looking good is what the church needs to do to attract and return visitors. (Dan, don't get nervous, I am not suggesting we trade you in on a better looking preacher.)

But where do you draw the line?

Jesus obviously drew it in a different place than Simon did.

When does how we look become more important to us than people?

Which brings us to accepting one another when we are more than visitors.

The word “accept” in your English Bible may also come from a word whose root means ‘to take by the hand.”

**Romans 14:1** <sup>1</sup>Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions.

The continuing idea here from Simon the Pharisee is that Paul is rebuking the 'Romans for trying to force others to be like themselves. If the message is “I will accept you if you become more like me.” That is not welcome. I think they call that Manipulation.

Churches that let this go on fall into divisions. They don't accept each other.

Even if they have a wonderful program to greet and welcome visitors – the visitors catch on pretty quick that members of a congregation are not accepting each other.

The most effective way to return visitors is to welcome them.

The most effective way to drive them away is to allow an environment where the members of a congregation don't accept each other.

Finally, welcome is the heart of intimacy. It is true in families. It is true among friends. It is true in the Church. When we have fellowship – we welcome each other.

Christians, like Christ, are supposed to accept others first. Even when they we don't think they deserve it

People are pretty smart when it comes to recognizing welcome and acceptance.

Complete this sentence "I felt about as welcome as \_\_\_\_\_."

Did your end to the sentence include someone not felling welcome in a church?

Have you ever felt looked down on by someone else? Did it make you feel more like listening to them and following their example? No, of course not.

Have you ever been made to feel really welcome? I'll bet the person who made you feel welcome had a much bigger influence on you.

Jesus changed the life of that sinful woman in Simon's house because she felt his acceptance of her.

Jesus changed the life of a fisherman named Simon the same way.

The same is true for two tax collectors named Zaccheus and Levi, a physician named Luke, and a persecutor of the Church named Saul.

All of these, Jesus changed by accepting them before they deserved it and welcoming them.

As Ambassadors of Christ it is our task to welcome others so that they may be reconciled to God.

## **2 Corinthians 5:18 - 20**

<sup>18</sup>Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Who are you making to feel welcome?

Have you been welcomed by Jesus Christ and not accepted him in return?

If tonight you need to respond to Christ's call for reconciliation, come.