“GREETINGS!” by Andy Diestelkamp

It is common courtesy in communication to extend greetings to those with whom we interact and even to those with whom we may only briefly intersect. It was typical of Paul in his letters to the churches and to individuals to have some opening and closing remarks which included some form of greeting. For example, at the close of his letter to Titus he wrote, *“All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith”* (Titus 3:15). To the churches in Rome, Paul closed his letter with an extensive list of greetings to specific brethren and then passed along the greetings of other specific co-workers in the gospel as well as the general *“the churches of Christ greet you”* (Rom. 16:16).

The word that is translated *greet* is the same word that in other contexts is translate *rejoice.* A greeting is something that is generally positive and expressed with joy and a desire for the recipient of the greeting to have joy.

In Paul’s time, a common form of greeting face to face was with a kiss (which would have been much like a brief embrace). Many are familiar with Paul’s admonition to “greet one another with a holy kiss” in some of his letters to the churches (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:26) However, the emphasis of Paul’s command is not on the kissing part but on the need for it to be *holy*. Since kissing to greet was already a cultural norm in ancient times, Paul’s concern was with its *holiness*. Since our culture generally associates kissing with more intimate relationships, we might assume that Paul is concerned with keeping those common greetings morally pure. While certainly, Paul *would* want to encourage holiness in that sense, this is probably not what was foremost in his mind.
 Paul wanted their greetings to one another to be sincere and genuine in their joyful expressions. That greetings might be insincere is no better exemplified than in Judas Iscariot’s kiss of Jesus. *“Greetings, Rabbi!”* he said with feigned loyalty and affection as he kissed Him (Matt. 26:49).This was *not* a *holy* kiss!

So regardless of the mode of greeting, we ought to be holy and sincere in our greeting of one another as brethren. We Christians ought to be holy greeters to *all* we come in contact with because we are also admonished to be hospitable (Heb. 13:2); and hospitality begins most simply with a holy and sincere greeting.

When strangers dare to venture into our assemblies, the *least* we can do is greet them, acknowledge their existence and their presence, and welcome them by showing a holy, genuine interest in them. When we leave such greetings only to others (e.g. the preacher, the elders, the extroverts, etc.), we are failing to be hospitable in this most basic and simple way.

Granted, some visitors may find greetings awkward and uncomfortable (as many of us do when interacting with strangers). However, a *sincere* welcome generally will be appreciated, and a failure to be greeted *will* be noticed.

So, let’s greet one another with a holy sincerity and also be aware of and joyful toward outsiders who courageously venture into our assemblies. Introduce yourself with joy and rejoice at the possibilities that may come from a simple, holy greeting.

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