



Sermon Series: Belonging

Sermon Title: What does your letter say?

Date: 1/8/2023

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Paul is struggling with his belonging to the Corinthian church, and he addresses his validity as an Apostle and raises the issue of him needing a letter of recommendation. The Bible is full of examples of times when one person sent another person into ministry supported by a letter of recommendation to affirm that person's validity. **Romans 16:1-2**

Paul brings up an excellent point - our lives and the lives of all who belong to Jesus are letters of recommendation that validate the power of the Holy Spirit.

LET YOUR LIFE BE A LIVING LETTER THAT GLORIFIES GOD

Paul was contending with false teachers who were promoting a lie that Paul was not an Apostle. Paul defends himself by reminding the church in Corinth that he did not need to bring a handwritten letter because his letter of introduction was the Corinthian church themselves. Paul and his companions delivered the message of Christ to the Corinthians, which brought change to their lives and their eternal destiny. This change caused the Corinthians to become a 'living letter' that could be known and read by everyone.

Just like the Corinthians, we tell the story of Jesus through our words and actions. What does your living letter – your life say about you and who you belong to? Let's look at the first impact it has

IMPACT 1: YOUR LIFE TELLS OTHERS ABOUT HOW JESUS CHANGED YOU

Colossians 4:5

The Corinthian believers lived much like we do today in an incredibly pagan and immoral culture. They no longer worshiped in the temples of the pagan gods. They would resist the sins that the culture promoted. Unlike the rest of their neighbors, they would have been continually striving to live righteous lives marked by forgiveness and love – just as we're called to do. The change would have been obvious. Like the believers in the Corinthian church whose

lives were witnessed by those around them – their lives and your life highlight the power of God's grace to transform sinners into saints and to give you a deep sense of belonging.

People outside of the family of God want to know if God can really change a person's life. In fact, they want to know if God can change their life. So, they watch you. They want to see if your walk matches your talk.

IMPACT 2: YOUR LIFE TELLS OTHERS ABOUT THE WORK OF THE LORD IN THE CHURCH

After Paul defended his legitimacy as an apostle working through the power of God, he gave the church in Corinth an even higher calling. They were not just a letter of recommendation for Paul, but most importantly, they were letters from Christ. **2 Corinthians 3:3 ESV**

The Corinthian Church was a living letter written by Christ, not with ink on a scroll, not engraved on stone tablets as the 10 commandments were - Paul clearly states the writing instrument was the Holy Spirit. It is because of Jesus that the Corinthian's lives were changed, and their lives were influencing others around them.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, just like the believers in Corinth, Your life is a living letter written by Christ to be, as verse 2 says, "known and read by everyone." People will decide if they choose to attend church based on what your letter says.

IMPACT 3: YOUR LIFE TELLS OTHERS ABOUT GOD

If people know you are a Christian, like it or not, they will attribute the characteristics you display to God. When you are gracious, helpful, approachable, and loving, they figure God is the same way. **Matthew 5:16b**

What does your life say about the character of God? About His trustworthiness? About his patience and His provision? What does your life tell the world about the God who came to earth to save them? By watching you, can they see what **Romans 8:38-39** says?

When others see how you talk and act and respond, do they understand that they, too, have the opportunity to turn to God so that Christ may dwell in *their* hearts through faith? **Ephesians 3:17-19**

Our mission at Grace is to *Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. One of the most effective ways for you to do that in your daily life is to be a living letter for Christ.

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Why do people make decisions about God based on what they see in people claiming to be Christians?**
- **Describe a time when someone saw you act in a way contrary to your Christian faith. What was the result? How did you respond?**
- **Have you ever been influenced by a person who professes to be a Christian yet acts like a non-Christian? Explain how that impacted you**
- **In your circle of influence, how can you make decisions knowing other people are watching your life? Explain.**
- **How can you be more aware in your public life that people are watching and act upon that knowledge?**