

What Does It Mean to Welcome One Another?

A Biblical Call to Radical Acceptance

In a world that feels increasingly divided, the Bible offers a countercultural command: welcome one another. This is not just about friendly greetings at the door. It is a way of life rooted in the gospel, shaped by humility, and ultimately done for the glory of God.

What Is the "One Another" Life?

As you read through the New Testament, there are over 50 different "one another" commands found in scripture. These commands are not suggestions. They are the building blocks of what it looks like to be the church together.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." - John 13:34-35

The question is not whether we should love one another. The question is what that actually looks like in practice. One of the clearest answers the New Testament gives us is this: welcome one another.

What Does the Bible Say About Welcoming One Another?

Romans 15:5-7 gives us a powerful foundation: "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." - Romans 15:5-7

Paul is not writing a hospitality tip. He is writing to a church in conflict, a church divided along cultural and religious lines, and he is calling them to something much harder and much more beautiful than surface-level friendliness.

Why Was the Church in Rome So Divided?

Around AD 49, the Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. Five years later, they were allowed to return. When they came back, they found a church made up mostly of Gentiles who practiced their faith very differently. Tensions over festivals, the Sabbath, circumcision, and cultural identity created real conflict in the congregation.

Into that tension, Paul writes: welcome one another. Especially in your differences. This is not a command for easy relationships. It is a command for hard ones.

How Do We Welcome One Another?

Sacrificially and Clothed with Humility

Welcoming others the way scripture calls us to is not always natural or comfortable. It requires sacrifice. It requires humility. It means making room at the table even when the table feels full.

It means looking past differences in politics, ethnicity, economic status, background, and belief systems to see a person that Christ has already welcomed. It is a disposition of the heart, not just a role on a volunteer team.

It Is Everyone's Responsibility

Paul does not address this command to the greeters or the hospitality team alone. He addresses it to the whole church. Welcoming one another is not someone else's job. It belongs to all of us.

There is a difference between a warm smile at the door and genuinely pressing into someone's life, walking alongside them, and helping them grow in their relationship with Jesus. Both matter. But the second one changes lives and even eternities.

In Unity and Harmony

Romans 15:5-6 connects welcoming one another directly to glorifying God together with one voice. Unity is not uniformity. It is choosing to move toward one another despite differences because of what Christ has done for both of you.

Why Should We Welcome One Another?

Because Christ Has Already Welcomed You

The "why" behind this command is simple and profound. Romans 15:7 says to welcome one another "as Christ has welcomed you." Think about what that means. Christ welcomed you unconditionally. You did not have to clean yourself up first. He welcomed you in your sin, in your mess, in your brokenness.

As 1 John 3:1 reminds us: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." - 1 John 3:1

He adopted you into His family. He has been generous beyond measure with His grace, His mercy, and His forgiveness. His mercies are new every morning. And because He has welcomed you that way, you are called to extend that same welcome to others.

Because It Can Change Someone's Eternity

When someone walks into a new place not knowing anyone, the way they are received can shape the entire trajectory of their faith. A church that genuinely welcomes people, that presses into their lives and walks alongside them, can confirm callings, restore broken faith, and set someone on a path they never would have found otherwise.

On the other hand, a church that ignores visitors or makes them feel invisible can do lasting damage. Welcoming one another is not a small thing. It carries eternal weight.

What Is the Point of All This?

Romans 15:7 ends with four words that anchor everything: "for the glory of God."

Twice in three verses, Paul connects how we treat one another to the glory of God. When we live in harmony, God is glorified. When we welcome one another, God is glorified. The primary purpose of your life is to bring glory to God in all that you do. And when a congregation welcomes and accepts others in the name of Jesus, something spiritual happens that goes far beyond what we can see.

Jesus said it Himself. When you love one another, the world will know that you follow Him. Welcoming one another is not just an internal church practice. It is a witness to the world.

Welcoming the Holy Spirit as Part of Welcoming One Another

There is one more dimension to this. Welcoming one another also means welcoming the gifts and the present ministry of the Holy Spirit. When the body of Christ makes room for the Spirit to move, to speak, to encourage, and to build up, the whole church is edified.

Isaiah 40:31 says: "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31

When we are open to how the Spirit moves among us and through us, we encourage one another in ways that carry people through their hardest weeks. That kind of community, one that welcomes the Spirit and welcomes each other, glorifies God in a way that nothing else can replicate.

Life Application

This week, your challenge is to intentionally welcome someone. Not just with a handshake or a smile, but in a deeper way. Look for someone who is new, someone on the edges, someone who might feel like they do not quite belong, and make room for them. Invite them to your table, your life group, your lunch, your conversation. Do it sacrificially, even if it is inconvenient. Do it with humility, even if they are different from you. Do it as an act of worship, for the glory of God.

Ask yourself these questions as you go into the week:

- Is there someone in my church, neighborhood, or workplace who needs to be welcomed and I have

been overlooking them?

- Am I extending to others the same unconditional grace that Christ has extended to me?
- What would it look like for me to make more room at my table, literally or figuratively, for someone who needs it?
- Am I welcoming the Holy Spirit's presence and movement in my own life and in my community?

Welcoming one another is not a program. It is a way of life. And when we live it out together, the world takes notice, and God receives the glory.