

“Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”  
Romans 15:7

## A Holy Kiss

### Accept One Another – Romans 15:7

I would rather be greeted with a good handshake than a holy kiss.

Paul on several occasions closed his letters with the phrase, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” In this series on “One Anothers”, we come to this one. On the outset, I am not advocating all of us going out and kissing every person we see, nor am I encouraging the greeters on Sunday morning to lean in and kiss those that walk in the door. Our western culture is more accustomed to a good strong handshake.

In the early church, and even in some cultures today, a kiss was the normal greeting. It was seen as a sign of friendship and hearty love. Several people are recorded as using a kiss as a greeting in Scripture (Genesis 27:26, 2 Samuel 20:9). Some greetings were not as friendly. Both Absalom and Judas Iscariot used this form of greeting for the purpose of deception.

What do you think the kiss conveyed when used as a greeting?

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Rather than be preoccupied with the practice of the greeting, we would do well to find the principle of the greeting. Both Paul and Peter call us to greet one another.

Why is it important to greet one another as believers?

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How do those in your church offer greetings to each other?

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If we take a look into the word “greet”, we can find that it means to enfold, welcome, and embrace. There is a level of intimacy that is implied. The intimacy that is present is the intimacy that is found in Christ. It is true that Christians from around the globe should have an instant bond when they come together. This is true even if they have not previously met.

Have you experienced a time when you felt connected to someone because of similar faith in God even though you did not know them? What was it like?

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Paul takes this one step further in Romans 15:5-7. He explains that because we are all one in Christ we must accept one another. The word “accept” carries with it an even more intimate or deeper meaning than does the word “greet”. *Proslambano* is a combination of two words. The prefix *pro* is a preposition of direction with an emphasis on close

proximity. When joined with *lambano*, which means to actively take hold of, we have a word that means to take hold of or receive into ourselves.

This is an active word, yet so many times we find ourselves being passive about our acceptance of others.

What do you think it means to be active about our acceptance?

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Let's consider the culture in which Paul is writing his letter. It is a time of turmoil and conflict. The Jews are crying out for a Messiah who will come and rid them of the yoke of the Romans. They see the Romans as the enemy of God and despise that the Romans occupy Jerusalem. The Jews also have come to despise all Gentiles because they are not of the children of Israel. Couple this with the fact that Christians were despised by all. They were seen as the rebel rousers by the Romans and as a cult by the Jews. It was a very hostile time for the early church.

Let's not forget to whom Paul is writing. The recipients are none other than the Christians in Rome. Could it be any more challenging?

In the midst of all this struggle and hatred comes a calling to accept one another, to "receive into ourselves" one another. This is not a casual acceptance of an individual, but a deep acceptance that looks beyond cultural, physical, relational, and historical differences. This acceptance looks past the exterior and embraces the heart of our fellow believer, which has, like our own, been made new through Christ.

What has been your most recent struggle in accepting someone?

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I will admit that sometimes it is hard to accept people. We can easily fall prey to nonchalant acceptance. We may even accept with our words, but in our heart hold something against that individual. (See the lesson on forgiving one another.)

What it boils down to is genuine love for one another. As we allow Christ to love through us, we will accept one another, not on the basis of personal likes and dislikes, but on the basis of Christ. It comes back to Christ as the Center.

So how do we accept one another?

I am drawn back to Paul's letter to the church in Rome. In Romans 5:8 and 10:13 Paul explains the level of acceptance as God sees it. God showed us His love and acceptance of us in Christ while we were sinners, and whoever will call upon Jesus will be saved and accepted into the family of God. God has no favorites. He accepts all who call upon Him and receives them into Himself.

This is more than just a nod of the head, a handshake, or even a kiss. This is a realization that in spite of my shortcomings and failures, in spite of my downfalls and mess ups, He embraces me and brings me close to Himself.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."  
Romans 5:8

"For 'whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Romans 10:13

Do you think there would be much room to bicker and fight with this kind of acceptance?

It would change a lot. Accept one another.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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