

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a pleasant greeting, isn't it? It's from Paul in 1 Thessalonians, one that he repeats in many of his letters such as 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. Each has greeting he adds a personal touch depending on who he was addressing.

I thought this first letter would be my greeting, and touch on why greetings in church are important. Recently I was reminded how important it is to extend a greeting. As I walked into a gathering I waved to someone across the room and tried to say hello to another and was ignored. Have you ever had that happen? I felt silly and a little hurt. In the extreme we may feel like turning and leaving. I didn't leave but it left an impression.

Paul's greeting may be a bit over the top at the grocery store or as you greet those with whom you work (you CAN use it at church!). But a greeting is important. It's so important that most retail establishments have made it a part of their sales. I am so used to it that today if I walk into a store and am not greeted I may feel as if I am not important to that store. Touchy, aren't I? But it led me to reflect if we do a good job of this. Do we greet each other well? Do I? I confess I do not.

Ultimately every Christian should greet other Christians. In greeting each other we show that we accept and receive them into our fellowship, because we are one in Christ. That is especially important with our visitors. Greeting visitors to our church is not just a courtesy, a polite gesture which we perform. It is an essential expression of who we are in Christ and of our unity with all others who are in Christ.

I do want to let you know that Jennifer and I, along with our kids Sam and Kara, have felt very welcome and greeted. We are excited to be here and look forward to doing ministry together. I have always enjoyed doing ministry alongside others as it teaches us new methods and perspectives, collaboration can take place on new ideas, and its just more fun! I was a Youth and Education Director at a church in Northern Michigan for over 12 years before becoming a solo pastor. In leading the youth group we created bonds with the other leaders that continue to this day. We haven't found a halfway point from Clinton to meet yet, but we will. So we are looking forward to getting to know each of you and will be praying that we can serve alongside each other in some way in the years to come. Next month I will share more about us in the newsletter but do want to share here what I believe Emmanuel's focus needs to continue to be: On God and on people.

People are to be a priority. We are to love and serve God, above everything and everyone else. And our service to God is to work itself out in loving and serving others. We are to offer our own bodies as living sacrifices to God, and as a result we are also to offer up to God those whose lives we have touched for good, for His glory and kingdom. I am hoping some of this sounds vaguely familiar!

God wants to bless us with his grace and peace, mercy and harmony, favor and fullness. We need to extend that grace and peace to others around us. These blessings come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that God's grace and peace is evident in your life.

*Pastor Chad*