

Keep Being Friendly!

Joe Slater

This is a friendly congregation, and I appreciate you for it! My heart warms when I notice how you welcome people who are new to our assembly.

Most of us have dropped in on congregations at one place or another where, to put it mildly, the reception lacked warmth. To be a bit more blunt, we were treated like we didn't exist! That's bad enough when we are Christians visiting a congregation away from home; but what if lost souls endured such thoughtless, un-Christ-like treatment? It could permanently turn them away from the gospel!

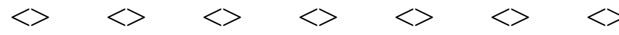
Jesus freely received people who were seeking God. He broke down the various barriers that hindered others from reaching out. The poor, the sick, foreigners, even the notoriously sinful, found unconditional love from the One we confess as Lord.

Our purpose must be none other than His. *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Matthew 9:13).

Being friendly shows others that Jesus really has made a positive difference in your life, and that you are enthusiastic about sharing His love and truth with them. Rejection, apathy, and self-centeredness characterize most of the world; when people visit an assembly of the Lord's body, let us not give them "more of the same," but demonstrate that Jesus has something far better to offer.

That doesn't mean we condone sin (Jesus didn't). It assuredly does mean that we love as Jesus loved, seeking the redemption of all.

I count it a privilege to work with fellow-Christians who exhibit the spirit of Christ toward each other and toward our visitors. I'm proud of you! Keep up the good work!



VITAMIN F

Why do I have a variety of friends who are all so different? How can I get along with all of them? I think that each one helps to bring out a different part of me.

With one of them I am polite. I joke with another. I sit down and talk about serious matters with one. With another I laugh a lot. I may have tea with one. I listen to one friend's problems. Then I listen to another one's advice.

My friends are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. When completed, they form a treasure box – a treasure of friends! My friends understand me better than I understand myself! They support me through good days and bad. We all pray together and for each other.

"Real Age" doctors tell us that friends are good for our health. Dr. Oz calls them Vitamin F (for Friends) and counts the benefits of friends as essential to our well-being. Research shows that people in strong social circles have less risk of depression and terminal strokes. If you enjoy Vitamin F constantly, you can be up to 30 years younger than your real age. The warmth of friendship stops stress, and even in your most intense moments it decreases the chance of cardiac arrest or stroke by 50%. I'm so happy that I have a stock of Vitamin F!

We all should value our friends and keep in touch with them. We should try to see the funny side of things, laugh together, and pray for each other in the tough moments.

via Jacksonville, AL

Why Do You Follow Jesus?

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6).

Ponder this question: "Why do I follow Jesus?"

Take your time and think on it. Be honest with yourself. What is your reason for following Jesus?

Is it because Jesus gives you direction in life? Is it because you recognize Jesus as the Good Shepherd, so you follow the Shepherd (John 10:27)? It is because there is honor in following and serving Jesus (John 12:26)? Is it so that you can walk in His light and not in the darkness (John 8:12)? Is it because you are terrified of the consequences of not following Jesus (Revelation 6:15-17)? Is it because family and/or friends expect you to? There are countless reasons.

What is your reason?

We tend to make following Jesus complicated. We make excuses like, "I don't know enough," or "I'll follow when my life is straightened out," or "Someone else can serve better than I can serve." Following Jesus is simple. First, do what He says to do. Second, follow His example. To do this, we must be in the Word. If we aren't, then we really don't know how to follow Jesus.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught many hard concepts and asked many hard questions. *"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?'"* Simon Peter answered Him, *'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God'"* (John 6:66-69).

One more question to think about. Is your way of following Jesus changing you into a likeness of Jesus?

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)