

The Church is not Friendly

Dub McClish

It is a sad experience to be in a crowd and not feel welcome. Those of us who visit congregations in other places have sometimes found ourselves wondering if they would rather not have visitors; but these experiences are surely the exception.

Sometimes we hear people complain that the church is not friendly when really it is. Occasionally, word gets back to me of someone who has visited us (or sometimes, even of those who have placed membership) and reported that we are unfriendly. I always have two reactions to such news.

My first reaction is sadness, disappointment. I don't like for anyone to come to our building and be around us and go away saying we are unfriendly. It should never be so and every member of this church should diligently seek out visitors FIRST, every time we meet, and do our best to make them feel comfortable in our midst. It is simply right to "show love unto strangers" (Heb. 13:2). We should all want them to return. If we fail to show genuine hospitality, we deserve such criticism. I beg us all to be watchful of this.

My second reaction, I must confess, is a wee bit of anger. The years have shown that often those who are quick to charge a church with coldness are revealing more about their own personalities than that of the church. Many of those who gripe "No one spoke to me" are the same ones who seek the nearest exit at the last prayer. No one spoke, all right. How can you speak to a blue streak? I have followed people to their cars to visit with them several minutes after worship, knowing that others had already greeted them, and still have heard that they accused the church of not being friendly!

Truth is, I don't know of another church that makes as great an effort to make visitors feel like honored guests. However, we're ready to do even better as soon as someone can teach us how. It is only a very few who ever say we're unfriendly, while I constantly get reports, both first and second hand, of those who think we are the friendliest people around. Doesn't this show that friendliness, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder? To put it another way, the friendlier you are, the friendlier you will find others to be toward you: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly", (Pro. 18:24, KJV). If you manage to avoid our effort to greet you the first time, please give us another chance.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, November 19, 1987, of which I was editor.]

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