

A Vision for Visitors

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Preacher: Pastor Wolski

[0 : 0 0] And we're not to love each other that way. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good, be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another, not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer, distributing to the necessity of saints, and notice the next three words, given to hospitality.

Some of the phrases here has to do with your love, has to do with your being kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love again, preferring one another.

There's an element of humility there with for sure honoring the other, having a fervent spirit, and he says then, given to hospitality.

Now come over to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. And this is an interesting book. It's a follow-up epistle to 1 Corinthians, where the Apostle Paul has some pretty rough, really the whole epistle is pretty rough.

There's several things that he addresses with that church that was really a very carnal church, and there was a lot of things that were out of order. And so he addresses several things in 1 Corinthians. Now the second epistle he writes back, and he's just relieved, and he's thrilled that they responded right, that they've gotten these things cleaned up, and so he kind of can talk with a little different tone here.

[1 : 3 6] Now let's pick this up in verse number 5. 2 Corinthians 7, verse 5. 1 Corinthians 7, verse 6.

So what Titus does is he returns from this church at Corinth to the Apostle Paul, and he gives them the update on how well things are going now. And the Apostle Paul rejoices in that.

But in verse number 6, he says that he was comforted. God, that comforted those that are cast down, speaking of himself, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

This was something that refreshed his spirit to hear this, not just to see Titus, but to hear how this church had responded, how they're doing. And in verse 7, not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you.

So Titus showed up, fired up, because of the time he had spent at this church in Corinth, and when he showed up to meet Paul again, it was just a joyous occasion for the both of them.

[3 : 0 1] Now, let's fast forward to verse 13. Verse 13, Therefore, we were comforted in your comfort, yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed. But as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting which I made before Titus is found a truth.

And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things.

So Paul's now, he really is commending this body of believers. They have really turned the corner and made some changes. And what I want to get out of this is really a simple thought in kind of a roundabout way, is I want Bible Baptist Church to be that church.

That church right there, to have that kind of effect on somebody that comes and attends our services here. That kind of effect that they walk away fired up.

[4 : 11] They walk away knowing they got something. They walk away knowing that there's life here, that God's here, that something's going on. God forbid that somebody could come to our services here on a Sunday morning or even a Wednesday evening and leave saying, I don't know.

Maybe, maybe not. Maybe I'll go back. Maybe I'll give it another shot. Or, eh, I wasn't feeling it. They're just staring at their phones the whole time.

That kind of thing. I want Bible Baptist Church to be that church that fires somebody up when they show up here. I want them to follow these three thoughts here. We're going to go backwards through the passage we were just at.

In verse 15, I want a visitor that comes to this church to be received. Look at verse 15. It says, And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you, how that with fear and trembling ye received him.

Titus remembers that he went to that church and he was received. It's a big deal for a visitor to come into a strange parking lot and to walk through strange doors and to come through a strange lobby into a strange sanctuary and see nobody but strangers and to feel welcomed.

[5 : 27] It's a huge deal to feel welcomed, to be received. Look at Galatians chapter 4. Let me run a few verses here with you on this. Keep your place, but just go a few pages to the right to Galatians chapter 4.

It's a big deal for a visitor not just to be welcomed, but to feel welcomed and to feel received.

Galatians chapter 4. And here's the apostle Paul speaking to these, which is actually churches. In verse 13 and 14, Paul says, You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first, and my temptation was in my flesh.

He despised not nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. What's Paul talking about? He's talking about the thorn in his flesh that God gave him. He calls it his infirmity of the flesh.

He calls it his temptation, which was in my flesh. And it must have been something. And you can do your own study on that if you want to. It must have been a big deal and something that could be easily shunned or he could have easily been shunned based on his appearance and on the way he felt when he approached people.

[6 : 42] You read about his lifestyle or about some of the things that happened to him. This is probably even a separate thought, but him being beaten of the Jews five times, 40 stripes save one, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, perils of waters, robber.

I mean, the life that he lived, he's got to have some marks on his body. And I don't know to what extent and what his physical visage was like, but for him to say that you know what I look like and you didn't despise me, you didn't reject me, but you received me.

It was something to it for him to actually come out and say that. We'd almost expect, yeah, the Apostle Paul, the greatest Christian, I mean, he's preaching the gospel, revelations of God. We'd expect him to be received everywhere he went.

But he took it as in, you guys are all right, that when I showed up, you received me. And there's something to receiving.

And I want somebody that comes in these doors, as a visitor to this church, to feel and to be received. Look at Philippians now, Philippians chapter number two. Philippians chapter two.

[7 : 59] And toward the end of this chapter is a man named Epaphroditus. Paul sent Epaphroditus to this church at Philippi. And I'll, let me start, I'll start in verse 25.

Philippians 2, 25. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants, for he longed after you all and was full of heaviness because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully that when you see him again, ye may rejoice and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such in reputation. Why? Because for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

This guy was putting his neck out there to take care of what you should have been taking care of, Paul said. It's a little slap, a little rebuke there, but he's telling him to receive this man.

[9 : 14] He's a visitor and this visitor is worthy of their honor and I don't know if without this recommendation and this commendation from the Apostle Paul, they may have been ignorant to who this man is.

Just like you and I are ignorant to who God sends through these doors on any week. We don't know who they are. We don't know what their life story is or why they showed up.

Made up a visitor card and on the back of it it says, why did you visit here? And trying not to be too intrusive, but what can we help you with? Things like that just to get a little bit feedback to know what brought you here, what are you looking for and what can we help you with?

This visitor, maybe they wouldn't have known what he's been through and what he's done for Jesus Christ. They may have just been like, there's a new guy, nobody knows him. But with that commendation, I'm sure they received him gladly.

He said, receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness. That's what I want Bible Baptist Church to be, to be a church that receives somebody and maybe you won't know. They won't come in the door telling you all their accolades and telling you the struggle that they've been through, telling you what they've done and how they've, I'll give you a story here in a little bit about something that the Lord's doing in somebody's life that you wouldn't know, that you just wouldn't pick up.

[10 : 39] But we need to receive them. Look at Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews 13. And here's a phrase that we just read in Romans 12, brotherly love.

Hebrews 13, verse 1, let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Now I'm not talking, I'd never believe there's an angel walking in this church.

Never believed that day in my life. I think that's a reference to going back to Genesis with Abraham. Because it's a fact that some have done that, so be not forgetful to entertain strangers.

I'm not worried about entertaining angels, but I am commanded to entertain strangers and to be hospitable, given to hospitality. hospitality. And if a guest arrives at your house, do you sit on the chair and say, it's open, help yourself?

Or do you get up and do you go to them and do you make sure that they have what they need, that they feel welcome, that they're comfortable? Do you do that to a guest that comes to your house? Well, I think Bible Baptist Church needs to consider how we receive our guests, how we receive our visitors.

[12 : 06] Maybe we need to get up. Maybe we need to go to them. Maybe we need to do something, show them that we care and try to make them feel comfortable so that they don't feel like a stranger.

So, there's a thought there from that passage. Come back to 2 Corinthians 7. when Titus showed up, the Bible says that they received him, a visitor, and he was received.

There's not only that, verse 13, we're going backwards through the passage, like I said. Verse 13 says, therefore, we were comforted in your comfort and exceedingly, the more joyed we for the joy of Titus because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

When a visitor comes to Bible Baptist Church, I want them to be refreshed. Not just received, but I want them to be refreshed in their spirit. To feel like this is a place where the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted.

Not where there's cliques and families and if you don't know somebody and you're not in there, you're never going to be. I want them to feel that this is a home. This is a place where the word of God is not compromised.

[13 : 19] It's the same book that they can carry in their lap, the one that we all carry in and that's what we submit to. It's the same Savior, the same Lord. The walk of life, the background, the history, the culture is not what's present here.

It's the scriptures and the Savior. And I want somebody to come in here and feel refreshed that their new man can feast and can grow and can leave satisfied because they got what they needed.

We all grow weary and well-doing and everybody that comes through these doors, they can get beat up by the same world, the same, they deal with the same Christ-rejecting society that we do and if they're a believer, they're a stranger and they're a pilgrim and they don't fit in anywhere down here.

They should sense a spirit within these walls that'll lift them up, that'll refresh them, that'll fill them and strengthen them and stir them so that when they leave, they know that it's real there.

There's something real. Those guys, God is alive in his people in Bible Baptist Church. I want a visitor to come to this church and feel refreshed. I want them to know that they can come back and get some more next week.

[14 : 35] I want them to leave here feeling like, oh yeah, we'll be back. We got what we needed. That was good. Remember, when you first found a place where you could get fed and where you could get fellowship that you needed and longed for, where you could get your spiritual needs met with like-minded believers that you didn't have to worry about their shifting with the culture and changing with Christianity.

You knew that you were home. You knew that you found, you remember that feeling? How it's refreshing to you where you can just not have your guard up all the time? I want a visitor to come here and not just be received, but I want them to be refreshed and know that they can keep going now because of what they got here.

There's one more thing here in the passage. We're going to go back all the way up to verse 7. And it says, and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you.

He was comforted. Titus was comforted by this church at Corinth. And so thirdly, I want the visitor that shows up here to be relieved, to be comforted, to be put at ease at a place they can just feel like, I can let my guard down here.

I can relax. This feels like a good home church to me. Good people, a good atmosphere, good fellowship. I don't leave confused and feeling like there was something I didn't catch on to or they preach one thing but they sure do act another way.

[16 : 08] They act conservative but I can tell out here they're not. I want them to be relieved. I think a visitor needs to know that there's a place that they can get comfort and get relief from this world.

The passage here describes that he was comforted by their obedience. Where's that at? Or later in the passage. Their hearts were right and that can be a huge relief to somebody seeking the truth and seeking a place to fellowship.

To find a place they feel like they can fit in. A place where they can come and participate as a stranger but see folks come to the altar or hear folks amen the word of God or praise the Lord and just feel like this is alright instead of just being stoic and dead and silent and everyone's so stiff.

A visitor feels stiff when they're around that. I like the looseness of this church. I like the atmosphere. I like the family vibe for the most part. Sometimes a little too chatty but I like it generally for the most part.

And I think it's great that a visitor could come and just be relaxed and be relieved. Now after Paul informs them of all these things he talks about a church in Macedonia going right into the next chapter in chapter 8.

[17 : 39] In verse 1 he says moreover brethren we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

And so in these first seven verses he talks about them giving and them just giving beyond their power and of their own selves. And this really the context of chapter 8 is their giving and I don't want to make that a point here necessarily but after he says that he challenges then this church at Corinth verse number 7 to be the same way.

Therefore as ye abound in everything in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all diligence and in your love to us see that ye abound in this grace also. So he wants to make sure that they're giving and sacrificing and taking care of as it were in this case other believers and I wouldn't I don't need a park there at all this church is a giving church and a true blessing.

And so now in verse 8 though this is where I want us to draw one more thought from verse number 8 I speak not by commandment he's talking about them giving I'm not commanding you that you have to empty your pockets to take care of somebody I speak not a commandment but by occasion of the forwardness of others and to prove the sincerity of your love meaning the churches at Macedonia did this because they gave and gave and gave and were such a help and a blessing and a comfort to these others Paul's like I'm not telling you you have to do it I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the forwardness because they're doing it I'm telling you you ought to hop in on this now the thought I want us to consider is just like Paul's saying not by commandment I'm not going to say this with a Bible verse and the backing of the word of God that you have to do be this but because others the occasion of the forwardness of others if we don't show hospitality to guests and we don't receive them and refresh them and relieve them others will be happy to there's other churches all over the valley that will be happy to have them come in when God brings them through these doors it's our duty and job before the Lord Jesus Christ to display this attitude of hospitality of love and of brotherly kindness and caring if we don't show it somebody else will and do we want to grow or not or do we just want to sit here and be like well it's your job pastor you go get them you bring them in here and then you preach to them and if they don't like you then it's your fault okay I'll bear that burden

I guess but I don't think it's my problem I don't think it's my fault or my duty or job to be the one that rounds them up I've already been here nine months and I've seen God bring people through these doors and it surprised me and I understand just the area this is different for me to be in such a large area with so many people and so I understand it's not a thing to see visitors show up I imagine I'm just assuming I imagine it's been like this all the time that people just out of nowhere pop in but with technology with the ability to reach out to get on the web to find things and search for information folks are doing a little more research than they have in the past perhaps and they're seeking specifically for what they want and checking it out and we've had people come through these doors that came because of what they found there's certain information and I'll tell you about that in a second I want Bible Baptist Church to be that church just like Corinth with Titus that visitor they received him they refreshed him they relieved him they were a help to him and a blessing to him and he went back to Paul full of joy full of excitement and Paul just they rejoiced together because of what took place now and on but it was same as as as as said

[21 : 59] James