

Letters to the Church



DECEMBER '22

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

I think we are all familiar with the painful loneliness of feeling like a stranger in a crowded room. My family moved several times during my childhood and so I had to learn more than once how to overcome the dreadful awkwardness of being the “new kid.” I was punishingly shy and if there was some way to somehow disappear by melting into a middle school wall I would have.

Everyone is in search of community. There is something divinely planted in us that yearns to be accepted and to form meaningful relationships with others. When this is lacking we feel lost, humiliated, and long in hope of human connection.



Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

DEUTERONOMY 10:19

It's good for us to remember how desperate being a stranger feels, in fact, God told his redeemed people in the Old Testament to remember when they were the strangers in Egypt. He wanted their assemblies to be welcoming and loving to the foreigners who came in from the cold. They were to be inviting, offering rest, and refreshment to the weary soul. For a sterling example, see Boaz welcome someone who would have been very outside his social circle, Ruth (a stranger, a foreigner, and a woman) to sit at his table and eat among his harvesters. **(Ruth 2:14)**

In the letter last month, we considered how we should be welcoming to the most familiar, but as members of the body of Christ and PA Bible, we should also seek out the strangers. Today, you and I as a redeemed humanity are called to bridge the gaps between the experiences of isolation that sin has caused and the renewed life of gospel restoration. Remembering, that we also had a time when we were the wandering ones. We were all at one time the alien, separated from God and His family **(Colossians 1:21)**. Someone sought us out and invited us into the fold. Now it is our opportunity to show that same kindness to others. In fact, we never know who may have just walked through the door.



Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

HEBREWS 13:2

It takes courage for a stranger to walk through those bell tower doors on a Sunday morning. Tragically, some only make it as far as the parking lot. Let's make it our prayer and heart to make everything from that point forward as warm and including as possible. Introduce yourself, introduce them to others, get them a cup of coffee, and invite them to sit next to you. That morning our praises could have been the greatest songs since David and Asaph, the teaching could have been "lights out" Bible, and the fellowship afterward could have been buzzing until 3 PM - but if no one noticed them, be assured, they will not come back - and who could blame them?

As a church, let's ensure that 700 Market St and our homes are places for the lonely because our Lord has called us to follow him. Our Shepherd seeks out the lost. He cares about welcoming the stranger, in fact, he takes it personally.

For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me

MATTHEW 25:35



YOUR PASTOR & SERVANT,