

Here / There: Relationships

Before Instagram, before tweeting, before texting, before email. If you wanted to communicate with someone who wasn't in the same town, you actually wrote words on a piece of paper. Sure you could call them, but that cost an arm and a leg. You would then stick that piece of paper in an envelope. You'd write an address on there, slap a stamp in the corner.

When you communicated old school this way, there was no delete key, no backspace, so you actually had to think about what you wrote. You could always cross out a line if you didn't like it, but if you were writing to your girlfriend or boyfriend, you didn't want to look like an idiot, so you you'd have to start the whole stupid letter over, and there were usually three or four balls of paper near the trash can.

So, you successfully get to the end of your letter. You sign your name, but there's something else you want to add. You forgot to say something, or you just want to leave one final special message, so what do you do? Post Script. P.S. And if you were pathetic and totally infatuated, you would have a P.P.S. and a P.P.P.S.

Those old enough to remember, though, know that it was in the P.S. where the really good stuff was. Even today, in the age of instant communication, the P.S. is the second most read part of a letter.ⁱ 80% read the post script first, after we see who sent it.ⁱⁱ

As the letter's final words, Post Scripts are powerful. They frame the entire letter. Consider the following examples.

“There is no mountain too tall that I would not climb to be with you. There is no ocean so deep that I won't swim it just to be by your side. . .I love you so much. P.S. As long as it doesn't rain on Thursday, I should be able to see you.”

“John, You are a great employee. You do everything we ask of you. You work great on teams. You are a joy to be around, and you accomplish all that is set before you. P.S. you can pick up your final check.”

We come this morning to the final words of Peter's letter. The post script, if you will. These are where he includes his final thoughts and personal greetings. We do our greetings at the beginning. They did them at the end. Let's be honest, we tend to skim over the last verses of NT letters. These verses don't introduce big ideas. We don't memorize these as favorite verses. It's just personal details, right?

As we complete our HERE / THERE series from 1 Peter, here's what we need to see in these closing verses: the importance of relationships in the church. As long as we are HERE, we are dependent on one another. We NEED each other HERE. When we get THERE we will live in perfect relationship with God and with each other. Paul says that we will know perfectly and be perfectly known. But we can't wait until THERE for relationships to be important. We need Christ-centered relationships HERE.

¹² With the help of Silas,[b] whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

These final words are personal. They are heart felt, and they are intimate. This is a window into the fabric of fellowship of the early church. This gives us an idea of what church can be like HERE.

There are aspects of faith that are supremely individual. No one else can repent for you. No one can believe for you. No one can trust in Jesus as Savior for you. But following Jesus was never intended to be an isolated and individual journey. Once you are brought into Christ, you are brought into his body which is the church. We are saved into a fellowship of believers. Faith is lived out and expressed in community. The love of Jesus is experienced in the context of one another.

Christianity was never intended to be a solo act. As Americans we might prize the rugged individualist, the self-reliant go getter who gets it done all on their own through their own grit and determination. But even Han Solo didn't fly solo. He had Chewbacca. The Lone Ranger wasn't alone. He had Tonto.

We are a part of a team. That team is called the church. The NT word for the church means those who are called. We have been called out of the world, called out of darkness, called out of sin, and we have been called into community, into fellowship, called into a place of relationship and oneness with one another.

We've just started a study on Wednesday nights on all the one another passages in the N.T. There are 59 one anothers in the New Testament. Love one another. Serve one another. Forgive one another. We are called to one another. Join us on Wednesday nights.

The church is where we learn to put hands and feet to our faith. It's where God begins to smooth out our rough edges. Yours and mine. That doesn't work in an online church. A podcast doesn't require you to love anything, risk anything, or do anything. True faith requires community. You will never find a perfect church, because there are no perfect people. And if you are an imperfect person, then we are the perfect church for you, because we're all imperfect too.

Even Peter, as an apostle couldn't do it on his own. In his closing words, Peter says I want to share with you the people who make me what I am. Without them I couldn't do it. These are people who have encouraged me, and helped me to persevere.

Silas

The first guy he mentions here is Silas. Some translations say Silvanus. It's the same name, just a longer version, kind of like Dan and Daniel or Tim and Timothy. You may

recognize Silas as one of Paul's ministry partners. He was the guy who was in the Philippian jail with Paul. Remember, they were singing songs of praise at midnight, when the earthquake struck and freed them from their imprisonment. Not only did they not escape, they convinced all of the other prisoners to stick around, and they reached the entire family of the Philippian jailer for Jesus. Not only did Silas help Paul, but he helped Peter.

Silas is a Jew, but he also speaks and writes Greek, and that is why he is so important here. Peter writes, "*With the help of Silas, I have written.*" Peter is the human author of the book. He was an apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But he uses Silas as a secretary or a scribe. Peter tells Silas what he wants to say, and Silas puts pen to paper. This was a common practice in the first century. Paul did the same thing and refers to them in his letters. It in no way takes anything away from the Bible.

Scribes would customarily write the body of the letter, but the conclusion, or the post script, if you will, would be written by the author. Paul did this, and many scholars believe that Peter does here. Peter takes the pen into his own hand, and writes out his final greetings, and thanks Silas for his help.

The reason scholars think this is these final verses are written in a different style from the rest of the letter. The vocabulary is basic. The sentence structure is less sophisticated. It's exactly what you would expect from an unschooled fisherman like Peter, rather than a man of letters like Silas.

Imagine the ministry that Silas had, he was the sidekick for two of the greatest Superheroes of the New Testament. He helped them preach the Good News. He helped them plant churches. He helped them write letters. Peter and Paul get all the glory, but without Silas, it couldn't happen. Silas is the kind of person that helps others reach greater heights.

Thank God for all the Silases. The church depends on Silases. They don't always get the credit, but ministry could not happen without them. They excel in helping others succeed. They bring out the best in others. They help other's gifts shine.

Peter regards him as a faithful brother. That could mean that he was faithful to God, or faithful as a friend. I don't see why it can't be both. Silas was such a faithful friend, because he was so faithful to God.

He has been involved in ministry for decades. It's been about 30 years since his time in the Philippian jail. He has stood by Paul and Peter through thick and thin. He was a man God would use in so many ways.

Two questions for you this morning. First, who are the Silases in your life? Who makes you look good? Who helps you succeed? We need to be thankful for the gifts they bring into our lives. We should call out the Christ-like qualities we see in each other.

Silas, he is so faithful, and dependable. You won't find anyone more loyal than he. Laurie is so joyful. Every time I'm around her for even five minutes, she picks me up two or three notches. She just makes me see God's blessings everywhere.

Matt is so patient. When most people have packed up and gone home, he's still there. He doesn't complain. He doesn't moan and groan. He's just so dependable.

Let us have spiritual eyes to see the spiritual qualities in one another. Give God glory for the fruit of the spirit in each other's lives. Let people know what a blessing they are.

Second, who can you be a Silas to? Who are you willing to make look good? Who are you willing to help succeed, regardless of who gets the credit? It's easy for us to agree that we all need a Silas or two in our lives, but are we willing to be the Silas someone else needs?

Mark

There is a second name we know here. In vs. 13, we see the name Mark. How do we know Mark? We also know him as John, or John Mark. His name isn't John Mark. Rather Mark is his Greek name, but John is his Jewish name. This was very common.

A few years ago we had an exchange student from Thailand. Her name was Kamiga Boonhomlom. Some people tripped all over that name, so she adopted an American name – Kate. Same idea here.

Mark also worked with Paul, and the first time didn't go so well. He was young, and he quit halfway through. It led to a strong disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. Paul took Silas and went one way, and Barnabas took John Mark and went the other (Ac. 15:36-41).

One of the great lessons we learn from Mark is that our future doesn't have to be defined by our failure. Years later, in 2 Tim. 4:11 Paul specifically asks for Mark, saying that he was helpful to his ministry.

Mark's mother provided a home for the church in Jerusalem. The upper room we read about in the Gospels very well could have been in Mark's home. Mark wrote the 2nd Gospel, most likely the first of the Gospels written.

And here we see he was helpful to Peter's ministry as well. Peter calls him a son. Peter views him as family.

Let's apply this to the church. Though your track record isn't perfect, you still have a place in the church. Part of Christian relationships is to help others rise above their past.

She Who is In Babylon

Silas, we know. Mark we know, but who is this "*she who is in Babylon*." People have guessed all sorts of things. It's Peter's wife or some other woman. But all those guesses miss the mark. The clue here is Babylon.

Babylon was an ancient city, even in the 1st Century, Babylon was ancient. She had been the home of a former world superpower. She was a pagan city filled with idol worship. Her armies had once decimated Israel, destroyed the temple, and sent her people into captivity, and her empire ruled the world. The Old Testament prophets use Babylon as a symbol for pagan, world powers.

However, that Babylon had been destroyed centuries before. There wasn't really a Babylon in Peter's day. Peter wasn't talking about anyone who lived in present day Iraq. But then here comes Rome. Another pagan idol worshipping empire. Rome also invaded Israel. They also persecuted many Christians and Jews. So, Christians saw her as a new Babylon. Throughout Revelation Babylon is used as a symbol for Rome. Babylon became like a code word for Rome in early Christian writings.

But who is *she*? Most Bible scholars think Peter is talking about the church in Rome. *She* is the bride of Christ. We know from church history that Peter finished out his ministry in Rome. I think Peter is telling the churches in Asia Minor that the church in Rome sends her greetings. This letter was written between 65 to 67 A.D. while Nero was emperor of Rome. The church in Rome was dealing with the first wave of state sponsored persecution. So, it makes sense if Peter is writing to suffering church under the cloud of persecution, he would want to keep her identity on the downlow.

Greeting

What can we learn from this greeting from the church in Rome? Well, the power and importance of greeting. On the one hand, the greeting is just a formality. Such greetings were standard and customary in the 1st Century, so they're really no big deal, right?

How come God saw fit to include such greetings in his Word? Even though Peter and Paul used the customary format for their greetings, they infused these everyday greetings with the grace of God. There was something more, something special, something holy in their greetings. Peter even invites the whole church to greet one another with a holy kiss.

The kiss of greeting wasn't new to the church. It was the standard practice of the day. But in Christ, a cultural kiss of greeting becomes a holy kiss. In Christ, a handshake can be a holy handshake. A hug can become a holy hug.

Never underestimate the power and importance of a greeting. Don't neglect shaking someone's hand and welcoming them on a Sunday morning. You never know what lies beyond that door of greeting. Real quick, here's the power of greeting.

- Acknowledges the presence of others in our busy lives.
- Embraces instead of ignores.
- Every important friendship begins with a greeting. (Jamie — album cover, Teresa forgotten Bible in chapel)

- Greeting is crucial to ministry. Ministry is all about people and relationships, and greetings are where those contacts first happen.
- Your next great friendship is just waiting for the greeting

What about the holy kiss? Is this cultural thing or is this a command? It is mentioned in five different verses in five different books. So, why do we feel so free to ignore a teaching that's mentioned five different times?

There is certainly a cultural aspect to this. It was the customary greeting in 1st Century, near eastern culture. It is still commonly practiced today. If the NT authors were writing in a different cultural context they might write about the holy hug, or the holy handshake, or the holy fist-bump, or the holy text.

There's some interesting history here. As the years went by in the early church, the holy kiss went from something pure to something putrid. Too many people used it as a sensual opportunity. They sought only attractive people to kiss.

The early church fathers had to regulate the holy kiss. Not to be gross, but they had to specify that the kiss be only with the lips, and not with the tongue. Boy, that would sure change greeting time. We'd have to set out breath mints next to the coffee and donuts. The rule said the kiss must be with "a closed and chaste mouth."ⁱⁱⁱ They had a rule that said you couldn't kiss a second time because you enjoyed the first one too much. They had to specify that men should only kiss men, and women only women, because so many were taking sexual advantage. By 325 AD the Council of Nicaea banned the holy kiss altogether.

Such things happen in our own day. There are those who like to hug inappropriately. There was creepy guy who loved to hug all the pretty girls, and the way he hugged just sent out all the wrong creeper vibes, and so Teresa and the other girls had this slide, scoot and roll maneuver all figured to escape his creepy clutches. We had a guy in one church who greeted my wife by calling her luscious. We put a stop to that real quick.

Of course, it seems like every other week I hear about another preacher caught in inappropriate conduct. The problem has become so commonplace; I read one article that said preachers should never hug a woman unless she was under 8 or over 80. I don't know about that, but this is why I try to be very careful about my interactions with women.

So is the command here about the kiss itself, or the affection behind it? Now, obviously, since I didn't kiss each one of you on the way in, you know I land on the affection side of things. I wouldn't be against kissing per se, but I think in our hyper-sexualized culture, it could be a dangerous slippery slope. I believe the principle here is the heartfelt, holy affection shown, and that can be done any number of ways.

Brady Boyd, Lead Pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs tells the story of a man who visited his church one Sunday morning. He had woken up earlier that day with the

plan of driving off a cliff up in the mountains to end his miserable life. He decided to go to church beforehand to give God one more chance.

During the greeting time a member of the church greeted him and shook his hand. He noticed the man was obviously distraught. He took the time to talk with him and pray with him. Afterward, he helped direct him to the help he needed. A personal greeting saved this man's life.

I used to think that the greeting time in a worship service just chewed up time. It was interruption to more important things. I don't think that way anymore. It can be more than a handshake and a hug. There is such a thing as a holy handshake and a holy hug. It can be opportunity for more than just, "How are you doing? Fine." Life can happen in those precious moments.

In fact, greeting one another can be one of the most important things we do in church. Each Sunday when we invite you to welcome one another, when we encourage you to meet someone you've never met before, look at those moments through Jesus' eyes. Just simply walking across the room and saying hello could change someone's life.

Not every handshake will save a life, but every lifelong friend begins with an introduction. Your hug may just be what someone needs today. Someone may really need to share a piece of their heart. Someone may really need someone to listen. All it takes is "Hello."

ⁱ McCraigh, Jim (2005) Write Words that Sell. Salt River Press. Goodyear, AZ. p. 105

ⁱⁱ <https://www.thewritersforhire.com/postscripts-are-important/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/comm/news/kissing.shtml>