

**THERE ARE NO STRANGERS AMONG CHRISTIANS
LOVE IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH – PART 4 OF 4
1 CORINTHIANS 16:19-24**

BONDED TOGETHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE

1. Aquila and Priscilla were **good friends** of Paul from his first ministry in Corinth and Paul possibly lived with them for **18** months (Acts 18:1-3).
2. In the early church, believers gathered in each other's **homes** for almost every Christian activity:
 - ◆ They **ate** together (Acts 2:46).
 - ◆ Teaching and **preaching** (Acts 5:42)
 - ◆ **Evangelism** (Acts 10:23, 27-48)
 - ◆ Discussions and **debates** (Acts 28:23)
3. Most often the gathering place for worship and fellowship was a believer's **home** (Acts 20:7).

KEY THOUGHT: The spirit of hospitality **exists** among loving Christians even when they have just **met**.

I. THERE ARE NO STRANGERS AMONG CHRISTIANS (ACTS 2:42-46).

- A. Hospitality should be **cultivated** as a **natural** outgrowth of Christians' love for Christ (1 Cor. 16:19).
 1. It is a powerful Christian witness for Christians to **open** their home to other **saints**.
 2. Hospitality is really not an **optional** virtue for Christians.
- B. The outstanding virtue of the Good Samaritan was **hospitality** (Luke 10:29-37).
 1. Jesus said our **neighbor** is the one Christians encounter who is in **need** (Luke 10:29-30).
 2. Jesus affirmed Christians are acting as a neighbor when they show **mercy** to those who are **hurting** (Luke 10:36-37).

KEY THOUGHT: Christians should encounter no strangers, only **friends** they have not **met** yet (Luke 10:35-37).

II. CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE WARM PEOPLE (1 COR. 16:20b).

- A. Warmth and friendship are shown with visible signs (1 Cor. 16:20b).
 - 1. The kiss on the cheek or forehead represented what a hug or warm embrace does today.
 - 2. Our culture has a phobia concerning personal space that frowns on demonstrations of affections between the same sex (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).
- B. Paul was speaking of the genuine and spontaneous expression of brotherly love (1 Cor. 16:20b).

KEY THOUGHT: A warm handshake, a loving hug, or an arm around someone's shoulder can express the same affection Paul described.

III. PAUL WRITES A FEW CLOSING COMMENTS HIMSELF (1 COR. 16:22).

- A. Paul wanted to issue a warning against anyone who does not love the Lord (1 Cor. 16:22).
- B. Paul was probably stressing the need to hold false teachers from participating in any church event that threatened the well-being of the body (2 John 9-10).

KEY THOUGHT: Paul stresses that Christians are to have a tender love for God (1 Cor. 16:22).

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND PERSONAL GROWTH

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SUNDAY: ***The spirit of hospitality exists among Christians (1 Cor. 16:19)!*** Christians are bonded together with a deep sense of brotherly love. Aquila and Priscilla were good friends of Paul from his first ministry in Corinth. It is quite possible that Paul lived with them for 18 months during that time (Acts 18:1-3). In the early church, believers gathered in each other's homes for almost every activity. They gathered and ate together (Acts 2:46). Christians met in homes to hear the scriptures taught and preached (5:42). They even had evangelistic events in their homes (10:23, 27-48). Certainly fellowship took place in their homes along with discussions and debates (28:23). The home was the most likely gathering place for worship and fellowship (Acts 20:7). The spirit of hospitality exists among loving Christians even when they have just met. What are some of the ways you could open your home to other believers and show hospitality? Ask the Lord for the courage to step out and open your home to others in hospitality. ***May this step of Christian obedience bring so much joy you cannot help continuing to entertain your fellow believers!***

MONDAY: ***Hospitality must be cultivated in a Christian's life (1 Cor. 16:19)!*** There should be no strangers among Christians (Acts 2:42-46). However, hospitality does not come naturally to everyone. The Bible indicates that hospitality should be cultivated as a natural growth of Christians' love for Christ (1 Cor. 16:19). It is a powerful Christian witness to those around you when you open your home to other saints. The nature of the Christian life really does not make hospitality an optional virtue for Christians. Do you enjoy being invited to the homes of other church members? Say "yes" if they ask you to come over. Bless others in return with an invitation to your home. Pray about the obstacles you must overcome in your mind to extend hospitality. Ask God to make provision for those obstacles and agree when He does that you will open your home. ***May the joy of being hospitable bring you and others peace, joy, and comfort!***

TUESDAY: ***Hospitality is to be extended to anyone in need (Luke 10:29-37)!*** The outstanding virtue of the Good Samaritan was hospitality (Luke 10:29-37). Jesus defined our neighbor as one that we encounter who has a need (Luke 10:29-30). Unfortunately, many Christians are not in a financial position to meet every need they encounter today. However, that does not mean we do not have a responsibility. Sometimes the best we can do is to try and provide spiritual substance in the midst of physical need. Prayer and loving care is always an option, though it does demand some of our valuable time. Hospitality is far more than just a meal, but the willingness to open our lives to others for their benefit. Jesus affirmed that Christians are acting as a neighbor when they show mercy to those who are hurting (Luke 10:36-37). Christians should encounter no strangers, only friends they have not met yet (Luke 10:35-37). Pray for ways God can use you in the lives of other Christians and those in need in your sphere of influence. ***May the Lord use your life and influence to advance His kingdom for His glory!***

WEDNESDAY: ***Warmth and friendship are shown with visible signs (1 Cor. 16:20b)!*** Friendly people are willing to be gracious to someone new that they meet. Friendship is

extended when you open your heart and life up to others. Friendship is marked by the exchange of greetings that demonstrate that depth of relationship. The kiss on the cheek or forehead in Paul's day represented what a hug or warm embrace does today. Our culture has a phobia concerning personal space that frowns on demonstrations of affection between the same sex (Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14). Paul was speaking of the genuine and spontaneous expression of brotherly love between believers (1 Cor. 16:20b). A warm handshake, a loving hug, or an arm around someone's shoulder can express the same affection Paul describes. With whom would you be comfortable to express such open affection? Pray about how you can be a witness of the great power of God through something as simple as a warm handshake, a hug, or putting your arm around a good friend. ***May the Lord use your gracious nature to minister to others who need to feel the love of Christ through you!***

THURSDAY: ***Christian affection is spontaneous and genuine (1 Cor. 16:20b)!*** Possibly you do not know very many people in the church well enough to greet them in such a warm manner. Pray about who you might begin to cultivate a deeper friendship with over the next several months. Ask them to go out to lunch after church to a restaurant or a park. Invite them over on a Saturday afternoon for snacks and fellowship if you cannot afford to invite them to dinner. Arrange to go shopping together at a department store or the home center. Get together to just watch the kids play or join them for some event in which your/their children are participating. It will require an intentional effort on your part. Pray about how this area of obedience will strengthen the quality and purpose of your life. ***May the Lord bless you each step of the way as you seek to be obedient to His directives in the Christian life!***

FRIDAY: ***Paul cautioned Christians against the false teachers that prey upon congregations (1 Cor. 16:21-24)!*** Common thought states that Paul wrote this last portion of the letter in his own handwriting. Paul took the scribe's pen in hand to possibly make this emphasis stand out or to give authenticity to the letter he was sending. Regardless, these few lines of text carry a warning to be careful in embracing those that lack a love for the Lord (1 Cor. 16:22). It was likely that Paul was stressing the need to hold false teachers out of certain church events. The thought was to prevent the spread of false teaching in worship services or home group meetings (2 John 9-10). Christians are to have a tender heart and love for the Lord, but are to be careful to protect the flock from the wolves that would ravage it (1 Cor. 16:19, 22). Ask the Lord for discernment and wisdom. Seek to be bold when you find there is the potential for wolves among the flock. ***May the Lord sharpen discernment as you seek to protect the flock of Christ!***

SATURDAY: ***Christians are a welcoming family (! Cor. 16:19)!*** There are many principles that we have outlined from this last section of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. Paul encouraged Christians to notice other Christians who are faithfully serving the saints in the church and to be supportive of them (1 Cor. 16:15). A challenge was issued to look for, and extend companionship to, one another in the body of Christ (vv. 17-18). Verse 19 speaks to the visible expression of our love for one another in the church. Finally, we are to be careful with those that are allowed access to teach in our church family (vv. 22-24). They should be carefully vetted and reviewed before being allowed to impact your church. Pray about which of these expressions of love you could incorporate into your life. ***May the love of Christ fill you to overflowing so that you can spill over into the lives of others for the glory of God!***