

Sermon Growth Guide

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THE KISS OF FRIENDSHIP | Romans 16:8-16

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Key Verse: Romans 16:16 – "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

Big Idea: How we greet and treat one another is a mark of the sweetness of Christian fellowship as we are united in Christ

Foundations

We all want to be known. We all want to belong. Yet loneliness has reached epidemic levels, and in a transient city like Colorado Springs, both the newcomer and the long-timer quietly do the math: "Why bother? One of us is leaving." This may be one of the hardest places to keep a friend.

Romans 16 answers with good news: if you are in Christ, you have a family. Not a metaphor-family, but a covenant family with a family business: making disciples of all nations together. The list of names at the end of Paul's letter reveals a community that is diverse yet united. We see slave and free, Jew and Greek, men and women, different house churches and social standings, all "in Christ," described as dear friends, co-workers, brothers and sisters.

True Christian community is marked by friendship forged in shared mission and proven faithful over time, and by a warmth and affection the watching world can see. Living this out is impossible in our own strength, but Christ has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility, and by His Spirit He is knitting a ragtag bunch into one body.

Jesus embraces us and calls us friend. Know you belong to Him and to His body and help someone else know that they belong.

Understanding God's Word

Read Romans 16:8-16 together. What do you notice about the people Paul names? (backgrounds, their roles, and the ways he describes them?)

Paul says people are "in Christ" or "in the Lord" nine times in this list. What does it mean that our unity is rooted in Christ rather than in similar backgrounds, life stages, or interests?

Why would Paul end his greatest theological letter by commanding, "Greet one another with a holy kiss?" What is he really asking of the church—and what might that look like in our culture today?

Applying God's Word

Friendship is often forged in shared work and shared mission. Where have you served alongside others at First Pres? What was that like?

Where else have you tasted friendship and community as part of this body?

Apelles' "fidelity to Christ has stood the test" (v. 10), while Demas "loved this world" and deserted Paul. Do you have a "2 a.m. friend" who is reliable, faithful, and present? Are you becoming that kind of friend?

Witnessing God's Word

Who in your life is quietly alone—new to the Springs, new to our church, or walking through a hard season by themselves? What is one step you could take this week to move toward them?