

HOW TO BE A WELCOME MAT



Let's say there's this person who walks all over you. Takes advantage of you whenever they need you, and then forgets all about you until the next time they want to use you. This goes on for a long time... but it happens once too often. One day you wake up and say to yourself, "I'm not going to be their doormat any more. That's it!" So the next time this person comes along and wants to use you as their little doormat, you smile and say, "Sorry, I'm not available."

Then one day the Lord comes by and says, "Yes, you've been a doormat long enough for people who have their own agenda... but Now I have a job for you. I want you to be a welcome mat for my kingdom."

Not a doormat.

A welcome mat.

A place where people can meet me and find their way to the Father's house. You are going to be a welcome mat for the kingdom of God."

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 5:46-48

When our daughters were in high school, they began spending time with some Jesus Freaks. Jean and I could not deny that good things were happening in their lives. But we wanted to be sure that they weren't being drawn into a cult. So one Sunday night, with their permission, we went to one of their meetings. Wall-to-wall young people, crammed into this house on a cold winter night, praising God and studying the Word. Awesome.

But the thing that impressed us most about these kids was the way they welcomed everybody who came. No exceptions. No matter who you were, or what you looked like, "Welcome! Come on in!"

It was like the angels welcoming newcomers to heaven.

You stepped in the door, and it was like the heavenly Father saying, "Welcome home!" through whatever servant happened to be nearby.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

"You must be perfect."

Jesus is not talking about "sinless perfection," a life without flaws.

He's talking about the Father's perfect welcoming love.

His offer of life to all.

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Everybody's sin! He died for everybody!

Of course he won't force you to come into his Banquet Hall. If you don't want to come, he won't drag you in against your will. But he wants you to know that you are welcome.

"Come on in! All that is mine is yours"!



That's his word to each of us, as we read these words.

"Welcome home! I've been waiting for you to get here. Come on in. Hey! bring the best robe and put it on them! Put a ring on their finger, shoes on their feet! Kill the fatted calf! We're going to celebrate"!

That's how the God of the universe looks at you and me as we come stumbling into his Banquet Hall with humble hearts.

You wonder why those people would drop what they were doing, stuff some bread in a bag, and chase off to the hillside to be with Jesus of Nazareth---thousands of them!

Yes they came for healing. They were drawn by his powerful words.

But there was something more.

Jesus made each of these souls feel the welcome of heaven. No one was turned away. No one was put down. "This is the kingdom of God, this is the vestibule of Heaven! Come on in!"

And they came.

And this is still how it works. When the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is alive in a fellowship, people are drawn. Just like they were drawn to those hillsides of Galilee. I've seen it happen with my own eyes. And I'm sure it's happening at this moment in many, many places---perhaps where you are. If the Lord Jesus is alive in our fellowship, and we allow him to have his way with us, we will see people being drawn.

Without gimmicks. Without promotion.

They'll just come.

Men, women, young people, old people, children.

They themselves won't be able to figure out what's pulling them. They'll be drawn like those fish swimming into the net after Jesus told Peter to let down his nets for a catch.

And the power of the cross which draws them, ("And I when I am lifted up [on the cross] will draw all people to myself.") will express itself in one simple way: the Father's welcome. Where people are gathered around Jesus, it is one place where nobody is rejected, nobody is bypassed.

"Come on in! This is the Doorway to Heaven!"



"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The Lord Jesus is calling each of us to be the Perfect Welcome that draws people into his kingdom....

....The Welcome Mat that draws people to the cross and heals them.

And to be that Welcome Mat for the Kingdom, there are only two requirements:

1. Know that you yourself have been welcomed. Know this!
2. Be that welcome for everyone God sends across your path.

First: know that you yourself have been welcomed by God.

"Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Tucked in the back of so many minds, is this idea that if you get too close to Jesus, your fun days are over. He's going to rob you of your joy. He's going to transform you into a religious creep. This is understandable, when one considers the abundance of "religious" types who cloud the room with gloom as soon as they enter.

But that's not how it's meant to be.

The man in Jesus' parable who found treasure hidden in a field did not become a gloomy cloud. He didn't stand there and weep, "O, if only I had the money to buy this field!"

In his joy, the man goes out and sells everything he has and buys the field!

The life Jesus gives you, when you let go of your old life, is a thousand times better than anything you ever had before.

Yes, you will carry a cross.

Yes, you will put in a good day's work in the Vineyard.

Yes, some of your friends may turn away from you.

But you will have a life like no other!

Peace which this world cannot give.

Joy no one can take from you.

You're royalty walking down the street.

You're a daughter, a son of the King.

You are under a cloud of glory by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

You have a heavenly Father watching over you, as you walk in his mercy---showing it to others---and as you breathe the breath of his Spirit day and night.

You are living under the welcome of heaven all the time.



Never forget it!

Secondly: Be that welcome for everyone God sends across your path.

The life we live under that cloud of glory is very simple: We are to be the Welcome Mat for everyone God sends our way.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

If you have abandoned your life to the Master, he says to you: "You are the light of the world!" He doesn't say, "Try your best to be the light."

He says, "You are the light!"

God himself shines through you!

You are a walking, talking invitation to the Banquet of Heaven.

Don't hide it under a bushel. Let it shine!

"As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you".

"Just be there in my name. You don't need a sales pitch! I'll give you the words you need. I'll give you the power you need. Just be there for the people I send across your path. Your job is to welcome them to my Banquet Table by letting my peace, my healing, my forgiveness, flow through you to them."

Some time during the next few days your phone will ring. Your heart will sink when you hear the voice on the other end. No, Lord! Not them! But then it hits you that this is not a coincidence. This phone encounter was set up by God.

So you lift your heart to the Father and cry for help and direction.

Or perhaps you're in the supermarket. You look up and see coming toward you the last person on earth you want to see. In a flash of heavenly insight you realize that this is a God-appointed meeting. So...

You yield.

You soften.

You hold still within and trust God for help.

Nothing dramatic seems to happen. No bells ring. No trumpets sound.

But because you accept this encounter as set up by God, something does happen.

This person receives from God, through you, exactly what they need.

They have been drawn one step closer to glory.

God is not looking for hot shots to revive his church.

God doesn't need smooth talkers or wonderworkers to get the job done.

He's looking for welcome mats.

People like you and me, who know that we have been welcomed....and who are willing to be there with open hearts for the souls God sends our way.



Just be that Welcome Mat.

And God himself will do the rest.

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Prayer-.Lord may we be the welcome mats from heaven that you call us to be. May we offer the same perfect,welcoming love to others that you give to us. May the joy of your welcome to us bubble up with such joy within us, with such awe and thankfulness, with such a burning light that it can't help but touch the hearts of those you send to us. May your love shine so strongly within us that others will know they are welcomed to your wonderful banquet table. Amen

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN