



# One Person at a Time - Each Email is From a Real Person with a Real Concern or Question.

By Bishop Greg Mohr  
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Time and again I hear myself sighing and then saying with an air of resignation, “I have a ton of emails to get through.” Perhaps you also have expressed frustration with the many emails you receive.

When I say this, I am not talking about the spam and ads from airplane companies or the stores I visit, and other such emails that come my way. Those emails are easy to delete or to read, as one sees fit. No, I am talking about all those other emails — the ones that take a lot of time to respond to.

To refer to this multitude of messages as simply being “emails and phone calls” is incorrect, for it minimizes what each one of those messages represent. Each email and each phone message represent a person, a congregation, a request for help, a sharing of information, a concern expressed, a hope for the future. Each email and each phone message is from a real person, with a real concern or question.

We all too easily can de-humanize email messages. We can end up referring to them as “a stack of emails” and turn our noses up at them as if we would much rather have those emails just leave us alone so we could get to our “real” work.

If ever I speak of all the emails I need to attend to and roll my eyes as I do so, it means that I have de-humanized them. I have turned the email into an object.

Each email is sent by a person, by someone with whom I am connected. Most often, emails are sent by people I know, by people with whom I have a connection and relationship. These “emails” have names!

So how do I change my attitude and my response? How do I give each email the attention it deserves and the incarnation it represents? I would love to hear from you as to how you manage to do that, how you manage to keep the focus on the individual and not relegate an email to a list of things you “have to” do.

If I refer to emails as “something to get through,” note what I have just done. I have stripped the email of the real, live person that wrote it! I have objectified it. I have broken relationship with that person.

When I receive an email from you, I want to respond to it in the same way I would as if you were standing in front of me.

That’s how I am going to try and approach email from now on. We are communicating with one another. You are not an object. You are not someone whom I wish had not emailed me.

I am sure there will be times when I resort to old patterns. Sometimes I do not feel I have the capacity or time to respond the way I would like. Forgive me. I will be working on that and will try to do better.

Thanks for listening.  
Signed,  
What’s-His-Face