

# Living Like a Church Family (Part 1)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 February 2021

Preacher: Fred Stone

[ 0 : 00 ] If you were asked to describe the church and base it on what you know the New Testament says about the church, how the New Testament pictures the church, how would you describe it?

What kind of picture, image would you use to describe the church? Tell me something. It's people. The church is people. That's a good main point to start with. What are we in the New Testament? Huh?

Unified, all right. The church is people. The church is to be unified. And two of the main ways that the New Testament describes the unity of God's people, the New Testament describes the church as the family of God and the body of Christ.

I want you to think with me about what these pictures are about. The New Testament pictures the body, the church is the body of Christ in several places. In Ephesians, Paul talks about some of this, but primarily in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

[ 1 : 21 ] In fact, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul sort of paints a picture for us to think of the individual members of the church as body parts, parts of the body.

For an example, he illustrates this by showing how our eyes, our ears, our hands, they're different parts of the body, do different things.

But each is vitally important, and they all work together to accomplish important functions of the body.

So, the idea of the church being the body of Christ means we need to learn to value each other and our differences, our gifts, our talents, our abilities.

And we need to learn to work together in unity as one body. We're different. We bring different things to the table. But we work together as one body.

[ 2 : 30 ] We work together in a healthy way. Now, the idea of the church being the family of God may be the most familiar. In John's Gospel, he tells us that all who believe in Jesus become children of God.

In fact, John, in his Gospel and in his letters, he likes to talk about Christians, members of the church, being children of God. Jesus taught us to address God as our Father.

We know the Lord's Prayer. Well, that's Jesus' way of teaching us. We need to think of God as, we're Christians now, as our Father. Then the New Testament repeatedly calls members of the church brothers and sisters.

So, the idea of the church being the family of God means we need to learn to love one another like a spiritual family and live together in unity so that we'll be a healthy family.

Now, I want to pause right here and say, as we go through this, we're going to apply it mainly to the church. The idea we're the family of God.

[ 3 : 46 ] We talk about being a family as Pickens First Baptist Church. That's what the passage is going to direct us to. But where you can, I want you to apply this to your home, your family.

We're going to learn some things that will help us to have closer families, more loving families in the right kind of way. And recognize that everybody in the family is different.

We have different ways we look at different things, but we come together in oneness and unity as a family. Now, I want you to answer two questions just to yourself honestly.

Do you appreciate the gifts, talents, and abilities of the members of this church? And especially those whose gifts, talents, and abilities are different from yours.

And do you work together with members of this church who are different from you? Do you work together in some kind of ministry of our church?

[ 4 : 58 ] And together, we actually accomplish what God wants us to do. Think about that. Do you do that? And then the second question is this. Do you think of the members of this church as your close family members, spiritual family members?

As you just look around right here in this room right now, as you just look around and you see different members of this church, do you think in terms of that's my sister, that's my brother in Christ.

We have this family relationship in the church. Now, I believe that most American Christians like us think more in terms of our spiritual lives and everything about it in an individualistic kind of way. Here's what I'm talking about. When you think about your relationship with God, your spiritual life, don't you think more in terms of your relationship with God, your Heavenly Father, your relationship with Jesus as your Savior and Lord, and then far below that or even sort of separate from that, you think about relationships with people in the church.

Now, certainly, the most important relationship is our relationship with God and the Lord Jesus. I don't mean to imply that it's not. But in the New Testament, in the church at Philippi that we're looking at right now, they truly saw themselves as a spiritual family.

[ 6 : 45 ] They were close. They were like an island of a Christian family in an ocean of pagans and unbelievers that you read about in Acts 16.

The unbelievers in Philippi, they violently opposed Paul and his preaching. They had a riot in the city. They had him beaten and put in jail and eventually ran him out of town.

And so, as these Philippian Christians, as New Testament Christians, most of them, as they thought about who they were spiritually, certainly they thought about their relationship with God, their relationship with Jesus, but at the same time, they thought about their relationships with one another.

It just all went together. They weren't just individual Christians. They were members of God's family. They were members of the body of Christ.

I want us just for a minute here to use the picture of being the family of God to make the point I'm talking about that we don't really, as American Christians, think of it like people in other parts of the world, especially New Testament Christians.

[ 8 : 00 ] Most of us in this room, we have at least some meaningful relationships with Christians in this church.

You have people in your life right here. They're a part of your life. You pray for them, especially about things that you know, their situation, they need prayer. You're there to help them.

You'll help to meet a need that you know that they have. But do you really think of them like your brothers, your sisters?

There's that kind of bond, that kind of closeness. Now, I say all of this to say, today's passage of Scripture finds Paul calling the members of the Philippian church to a depth of Christian unity that is far deeper than what most of us have ever experienced for sure and maybe even much deeper than we can even understand.

Read with me if you would. Philippians chapter 2. We're going through the book of Philippians now. We'll finish chapter 1. Chapter 2. So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[ 9 : 44 ] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

We're going to look at this in two parts, verses 1 and 2 today, verses 3 and 4 next week. But before we actually get into this study, I want us to pray and ask God to do two things.

Let's ask God to help us to understand the depth of true Christian unity like a family.

Number two, let's ask God to help us to desire and then develop this kind of unity, oneness, family atmosphere here in this church.

Let's pray together. Dear God, we are thankful that as we look at this passage, we're not looking at it as a corrective to great division in our church.

[ 10 : 57 ] We thank you, Father, for the way you have blessed us to avoid a lot of conflict and controversy over many, many years.

But Lord, help us to see as we look at this passage that Christian unity, fellowship, oneness is an important part of living life in this world.

Help us, first of all, to understand that being Christians joined together in Christ, joined together in this church family, we should be developing close, family-like relationships.

Father, give us that kind of desire. Help us to understand it. Help us to desire it. Help us to put forth the effort to enjoy it. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Paul is calling us here to a deeper and stronger level of Christian oneness, unity. Let's look at it. Number one, to experience true Christian unity, we must build upon some common Christian experiences.

[12:18] Look at what he says in verse one. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from His love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, then He wants you to be united.

Now the word so there, he begins so, could be translated therefore. That's how the NIV translates it. Paul's building on what he's just said in chapter one, verses 27 through 30 that we looked at last week.

I want you to notice two verses or chapter, verse 27, part of verse 28. Look at this. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

What we saw last week was Paul's call to the church. You've got to be united. You've really got to draw together to stand together against all these people everywhere you look who oppose you, who oppose everything you stand for.

Christian unity is important. The unity of the church is important as we face a hostile world. But what he's talking about now is he dealt with that and now he's looking inside the church and he's thinking this is a good church.

[13:43] This church is overall pretty together. They're the most supportive of Paul. He is the most positive in this letter than any church he writes to.

It's a good situation. It's not just, you know, about to split like the church at Corinth that you read about in 1 and 2 Corinthians. But he knows there are some issues.

And so he's writing this to strengthen their unity in spite of the, you know, the underlying problems. For example, he's going to address later in the letter in chapter 4 a problem that he knows exists between two women.

Look at this, chapter 4 verse 2. I entreat, I urge, or plead with Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Now I want you to think, Paul writes this letter to the church with the eye to understanding it's going to be read to the whole congregation.

And as this letter is read, think about it. It's like he says to, in front of the whole church, it'd be like me saying to the whole church, I plead with Elaine and I plead with Lisa.

[14:55] Get along. Work out your problems. This is not good. That's awful, isn't it? That's awful to have your name called because you're causing division in the church.

But he did it because that's how concerned he was that this church that was on solid ground stay that way. As Barney Fife would say, he's nipping it in the bud.

He's not going to let it get out of hand that it could. So he begins calling them to this deeper level of unity by reminding them of some of the things they have in common.

That's what verse 1 is all about. The word if here at the beginning does not mean there's a question. It's sort of like a rhetorical kind of question. It could be translated since these things are true or because these things are true.

I want you to look real quick in verse 1 at some of the things that we all have in common if we're Christians. Here's the idea. Every one of us in this room who are Christians and members of this church we share some of the same spiritual experiences in our relationship with God.

[16:18] He's going to call out or bring to light four of them. I'm going to use the phrases that he uses. Encouragement in Christ. We all have experienced encouragement. It can be translated comfort as a result of our relationship with the Lord.

You being a Christian you having a relationship with the Lord talking to him in prayer just sensing his spirit within you you know what it's like to have the assurance that maybe that you're forgiven that you're right with God you're a child of God.

If you die you'll go to heaven. We all if we're Christians we have that. Number two any comfort from love.

Now the first thing Paul said is the encouragement in Christ. The third thing he says is fellowship in the spirit. This may be a reference to the love of God and he's trying to get us to think in terms of how each member of the Trinity the Father, Son and Holy Spirit help us in our lives.

But either way as Christians we all have experienced comfort knowing that God loves us. Or if he's talking about the love within the church even we've experienced that from other people if we're members of the church and involved in any way.

[ 17 : 40 ] So all of us there are times in our lives when we have experienced God doing some things in us just to assure us of his love and that nothing can take us away from him.

Third any participation in the spirit. He's describing how he's describing a Christian fellowship as a result of the Holy Spirit working in us when he saved us. When we were born again the spirit of God brought about brings about a new nature in us and we are brothers and sisters in Christ whether we realize it or not and he helps us to have a special kind of fellowship if we'll develop it.

We have this common experience. there's something within us that causes us to desire to have fellowship with other Christians. If you have that desire I want you to understand as a Christian other people in this room do too.

Some more than others it's a common experience. Number four any affection and sympathy or compassion. As people who've been changed by God we have within us heartfelt tenderness and compassion for some people at some times.

A person who is just cold hearted hard hearted all the time nothing softens them. They never have any compassion any sympathy for anybody. They can't be a Christian in whom the spirit of God lives.

[ 19 : 10 ] Every one of us in this room there are certain situations that people are involved in and it just gets to us. we sympathize we empathize with them.

It breaks our heart for them. We show affection or compassion in certain ways being there helping them something like that.

The point Paul is making here is every member of the church every Christian has these kinds of common experiences.

I want you to sort of look around here it's easier to do with these chairs. Everybody in this room who are Christians despite their differences they have these kind of things in common.

They've experienced what you've experienced in their relationship with God His love His grace they understand have a desire for a Christian fellowship we already have this in common.

[ 20 : 12 ] Now in verse 2 let's start working on what strengthens our unity. By the way thinking about your home you and your spouse you and your children you and your parents hey even your brothers and sisters you've got a lot in common under that house.

You're very different you're at different stages in life but I want you to think right now there is much that you share in common with your family members that you need to focus more on rather than just the differences that you see and maybe experience.

Number 2 to experience true Christian unity we must develop a common Christian mindset. Look at verse 2 he says complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind.

I want you to know how Paul makes this appeal make my joy complete. He has a great relationship with these people. It's like he's saying we've got a great relationship it started off well we've continued well you have supported me I pray for you all the time we're close make my joy complete by listening and doing what we're talking about and then let's look at it.

We need to have the same mind or be like minded. If we're going to experience real unity in our church be a real Christian family we're talking about we've got to have the same mind or be like minded.

[ 21 : 54 ] basically the same person you were before you became a Christian in terms of your personality who you are your Myers Briggs temperament you've taken any of those kind of tests that's who you are who God made you you still have the same talents and abilities that you had and when you became a Christian the Lord gave you some spiritual gifts and so as you look around there's a lot of differences in this room by God's design and we don't have to cease being who we are to be this

Christian family just like in your home you're different man husband wife child children y'all are different you know as parents a lot of times it takes a while to figure it out we aren't going to change our children's basic nature if your child came into this world as a strong willed I know what I want I'm going to do what I want they're never going to be the little mild meek and passive life's okay kind of person that's not who they are that's not how they're made now they've got to get that strong will under control you've got to manage it you've got to put it in the right direction you've got to teach them to learn to obey be under authority you don't just accept them just as they are but you accept them as God made them and that's how we have to accept one another no matter what Brian's going to be Brian I'm going to be me Colton is going to be Colton and that's okay that's who you are but we are called to work together in unity and oneness like a good strong healthy family now we also do this what I'm talking about here is not really unique to the church the close family relationship should be there but they're in other places this is basketball season we'll use basketball as an example basketball teams made up of guys and women different heights different bills different skills you don't want them all to be the same if I'm going to put together a basketball team I want to have one guy who's seven foot two if I can but I want some guys I don't care how tall or short they are to be able to dribble the ball they got to be able to take control bring the ball down the court pass it off

I need some people who can shoot but when they come together on that court they got to function together as one one unit one team one body one family we understand that it's the same way where you work most businesses people who go there every day very different in every way have different job responsibilities but if the company is going to function as the owner intends everybody's got to come together and work together as one to accomplish the common purpose make money or whatever the business is going to do in the church we need to have the same mindset that we've come together for a purpose we're going to look at it in a moment we've come together not to be individuals we don't exist in this church for me to be some kind of speaking star or Brian or singers to be some kind of singing stars or anything like that we come together to accomplish the purpose God has given us that we'll look at in a moment we've got to have the same mindset that's going to happen in your home you've got to have the same mindset here we're going to be a family no one person is going to call the shots or be the star we're going to be one family number two we need to have the same love love is the unifying force in all of life it's what

God uses to draw people together it's what unites a man and woman together in a healthy marriage certainly there's commitment I understand that aspect there's got to be love for it to be a meaningful commitment love is what unites parents and children even siblings now when we think about this kind of love that unites in our homes at church we need to make sure we understand it's a certain kind of love that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 I want you to look at it with me as we look at this I want you to think about you there are times when the lack of love and unity in the home or in the church I'm a part of the problem because I'm impatient because I'm not kind because I don't exercise any self control as we go through that look or think about you please do not punch your spouse child or parent and I read something here a while back makes me say this

[ 28 : 01 ] I don't know anybody in our church that is this way I don't really know anybody personally but I read that there are some men who think they're spiritual giants go to church every Sunday and what they will do is they'll take what we're going to see there on 1 Corinthians 13 and they'll go home and cram it down their wife's throat that's not being a spiritual leader that's being just a point blank jerk and that's going to alienate your wife or your children if you go home and cram this down their throat you think about you I'm thinking about me and if your spouse or children or parents they're far from this pray for them ask God if they're in this room right now ask God convict them of their lack of patience or whatever you can't be the Holy Spirit you can't be God let them be convicted taught by

God and you just focus on you right now here's the kind of love that will unite a church a home many groups love is patient and kind love is not envy or boast it is not arrogant or rude it does not insist on its own way it is not irritable or resentful it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love never fails this is the kind of love we need to develop and demonstrate in everything that we do here in this church and everything you do there at your home if you want us to have a united family like church if you want your home to be a true united loving family we also see in this passage number three we need to be in full accord and of one mind new american standard translates this united in spirit

intent on one purpose the idea here is to be of one soul some commentators describe this as Christians being soul brothers and soul sisters just having the same passion you might think the same drive same motivation now as I said earlier this does not mean that we are united and passionate about all the same things you know when I use the example a while ago about sports teams basketball teams some of you that's something that interests you sports some of you probably rolled your eyes you don't care a thing in the world about sports there's nothing wrong with that I mean you're a little odd if you don't care anything about sports but in the big picture things there's really nothing wrong with it so I love the music we do but I don't think about planning it and rehearsing it and I don't think about all the stuff's got to be done when we move from over here from the sanctuary over here that's not my thing you don't know it but you're thankful that's not my thing they don't even try we don't all have to be gung-ho about every single thing the church is doing but we've got to be gung-ho about us

Pickens First Baptist fulfilling the purpose that God has given us in His word we put it together like this a long time ago our purpose is look at it Pickens First Baptist Church is this to be a worshiping evangelizing learning and loving family of faith to the glory of God we exist to be a well church we also said when we developed this how we go about this through the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer we will seek to accomplish our purpose through a vital worship encounter with the living God evangelistic outreach to the unsaved learning experience with the word of God and loving involvement with both our family of faith and the world our purpose is based on the way that Luke in Acts chapter 2 summarized how the early church was functioning what they were doing shortly after the day of Pentecost and God had just brought them all together it was all new this is what they were doing the key for a church to experience unity year in and year out through good times and hard times including a pandemic is for us to number one love one another with a self-giving love like we saw in first Corinthians 13 that's got to be our foundation we're going to love one another the self-giving kind of love but number two we've got to always stay focused on our purpose and work together with our talents our abilities our gifts our money everything to accomplish this purpose and if you think about you know some people have the idea the church ought to do this ought to do that if it doesn't fit in with worshiping evangelizing learning that's discipleship studying the Bible teaching the Bible and loving Christian fellowship meeting needs in Jesus's name we might call that some people call that benevolence but it's not just providing what people need is provide what people need in the name of Jesus with a gospel witness that's what we're about we're not some kind of religious social club or anything like that we are a church with this purpose now if everyone will be focused on this goal and working to this end in love we will stay united it's like Rick Warren said I've got to put this in my notes so I'm just going to read it to you he says if everyone is paddling the boat toward the destination they won't be able to rock it in a lot of churches there's a lot of a lot of churches the trouble is there's people who do nothing but rock the boat they don't paddle they don't serve they don't use their gifts time gifts and abilities and so forth they don't use it to be involved in ministry they're not helping the church to achieve its purpose they just rock the boat if we'll love one another use the gifts God's given us the talents and the abilities in some aspect of ministry for the purpose of worship evangelizing learning and loving we won't rock the boat in fact the boat won't get rocked so let me just wind this up by asking are you contributing to the unity of the church and I might want to ask I need to also emphasize are you contributing to the unity of your home are you making our church more like a family by your loving involvement service relating to people are you making your family a more loving place place where everybody wants to be where everybody can just be at relaxed and at ease and know this is home are you contributing to that that kind of unity in your home let me ask you this if that's what we want here at home ask God to help you to love your brothers and sisters in

Christ here at our church and ask God to help you to truly love your spouse your children your parents your brother your sister it's not always easy to love in fact a lot of times it's hard to love some people are very hard to love some people just seem like they don't want to let they don't want you to love them that's what we're called to do here in the church and in our homes especially and then are you asking God to help you stay focused on our purpose here at church and asking him to help you to stay involved or show you how to get involved maybe in moving our church in the direction we need to go to fulfill our purpose let's pray together dear God help us now to see what we need to do to contribute to the unity and harmony and family-like atmosphere of our church and what we need to do contribute to this family healthy atmosphere at home father show us do we need to get more involved in people's lives show more interest develop deeper relationships

show us father if we need to show the people in our homes that they're first in their life before the people at work or the people at school dear God we pray that you will help us to truly understand and desire to have Christian family unity oneness here in this church help us to have that to desire that and help us all put do what we need to do to develop that and achieve your purpose and Lord I do pray that you'll help people in this room who you need some work to be done in their home life maybe in their lives maybe in their lives maybe in their lives their lives their lives their lives their presence their actions create within all of us right now dear God we pray a heartfelt desire to be a part of a God honoring home with our family members a God honoring church family with our brothers and sisters in our brothers and sisters in Christ here show us how we should respond let's just all pray and ask God to make it clear and let's just obey him respond in the way that he wants us to this morning let's just bow our heads close our eyes there's music that'll be played for us just to have some thinking time make good use of it so you you you you you you you