

Living Like a Church Family (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] outside of your biological family, where have you sensed the most family-like bond? Just the sense of oneness or closeness.

Think about it for a moment. As I think about it, and I'm going to believe girls and guys both in here, you experienced it to a great extent on some type of sports team.

There are people who are on a team all the way from little league to high school, even college.

They don't get to play that much, but they love the sense of camaraderie. It's like a family. Their fellow players or their brothers or their sisters.

Coaches are like fathers to them. Some of you experienced that in a band. Some of you at Pickens High School. Some at maybe a college. Some of you are fortunate in that the place that you work, there's maybe your office, or some department, or some work group.

[1 : 13] And there's just a real closeness, a family-like bond. Now, don't answer out loud, but do you sense that at church?

Have you ever? Do you here? Do you in a Sunday school class, or some other small group that meets on a regular basis, and you really get to know one another and share life together as brothers and sisters in Christ?

You know, one of the most well-known ways the New Testament describes the church is that we're the family of God. I mean, God is our Father. Jesus taught us to pray, think of God as our Heavenly Father, we who are Christians.

And throughout the New Testament, Christians, members of the church, are referred to as brothers and sisters over and over again. And so as we think about church, we need to understand that from God's perspective, what the Lord intends, we're supposed to be like a family.

We love one another. In spite of our differences, and sometimes disagreements, we love one another, and we work together in doing what God's called us to do as Pickens First Baptist Church.

[2 : 42] Now, I thank God that we don't have a problem with bad blood or division between individuals or groups in this church. You know, if you were just here for the first time, you haven't been here many times, you might think the way he's starting, and when we look at this particular passage of Scripture, you might think to yourself, there's a problem.

He is really dealing with some division in the church. I'm not aware of anything like that. We are dealing with this subject matter because that's where we are in the book of Philippians, and we're going through the book of Philippians.

So that's one of the good things about going through a book of the Bible. You cover all kinds of topics, things that the Lord knows we need. So I'm not thinking about, I don't know about any kind of rupture in our church family.

Here's the way I'm approaching this, last week and this week. Do you feel like you are a part of a close-knit spiritual family here in this church?

Now it's hard for that to take place together here like this, but in smaller groups is where you really experience it, where you really feel it. You know, many churches have difficulty being a close-knit family.

[4 : 14] There's a lot of reasons, but one, we American Christians, this is not my, I didn't come up with this idea. I've read this numerous times, and it's true, but we as American Christians, we mainly emphasize the idea of our spiritual lives having a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ, with God as our Heavenly Father.

And while we like fellowship with other Christians, it's sort of the icing on the cake. It's not a part of the real foundation of what the church is supposed to be in the way that we normally think.

If we're right with God, that's the main thing. And it is the main thing, but it's not the only thing. Another thing that makes it hard for a church to really bond together, some churches, some areas, is a lot of us, we have close, immediate, or extended family members right here close by, and we don't really have a need for a lot of other close relationships.

And you think maybe how busy your life is with work and other things you've got going on, your immediate or extended family members, they're not only meeting your needs, but they're, you think to yourself, they're the only ones I have time for.

And so when you think about all this together, it's not an easy thing for a church family to really, it's not easy for us to come together and really think of one another, relate to one another like a real family, as the New Testament calls us to do.

[6:10] Now, God calls us to be serious about this, to truly love one another like family, and work together in harmony, doing things to help us to accomplish our purpose ministry-wise.

God wants us to do that as a way of expressing our love to Him, as a way of obeying Him. We can think about, we need to be the kind of spiritual family that the Bible, we're going to be reading about, and it pleases our Heavenly Father.

Let me give you a thought here. Every parent in this room, it doesn't matter if their children are 6, 8, 10, or if they're 50, 60 years old, every parent in this room would say that one of the greatest joys in my life is for my children, to see my children love one another.

Get alone. Have good relationships. Now, kids in this room, people in this room who are children, teenagers, never been married, you may not can understand that, but there is nothing that pleases your parents more than to see you get alone, love one another, just enjoy being together.

And on the other hand, one of the most disappointing, hurtful things in all of life for a parent is when their children despise one another, always at each other's throats, or they don't have anything to do with one another.

[8:07] It's not enough for parents to have children that don't just fight, but ignore one another.

That's the way it is in the church. God is not pleased just when we don't fight. He wants us to really be a family and live and enjoy life together as we can as a church family.

I want you to turn with me back to Philippians chapter 2. We're going to continue looking at verses 1 through 4, verses 3 and 4 in particular today, what we started last week about developing greater closeness in this church, developing real family-like relationships with one another in this church. Philippians 2, verse 1. 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.

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.

[9:36] This is Paul's way of calling this church he's writing to. He knows them well. He has a great relationship with them. And overall, it's probably the best church that we have a letter from Paul to that church in the New Testament.

But everything's not perfect. There are some issues there that he is trying to address. And trying to help them understand how to grow deeper together as true brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Let's look at what that requires. Now, like we did last week, as we go through this passage, you apply this to your home life wherever you can. Every point, everything we look at is not going to apply to your family.

But a lot of it can. A lot of it will if you'll think through it that way. And it may be that what you really need to get out of this message is not so much being closer to people in this church, although that may be a need, but it may be that God's got you here this morning to help you see the need for you to start working on being a better parent parent or child or brother or sister in your home.

Let's look at it. Number one, to experience true Christian unity, we must build upon some common Christian experiences. Paul's writing to this church and before he starts talking to them about really, you know, putting one another first and be humble before one another, he's trying to look at this church and say, there's a lot of things you've got in common that you share together.

[11:05] And we looked at that a little bit last week in verse one. I want to look at just one thing right here. He says, we've all experienced encouragement in Christ. That word encouragement, sometimes it's translated comfort, sometimes it's translated help.

The idea is we've experienced encouragement, comfort, help through having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

For an example, if you're a Christian, you know what it's like to be forgiven of your sins. Some people in this room may, you may have before you became a Christian or at some point in your life through what you did sinfully, you confessed it, you repented, you know what it's like to have a great weight of guilt removed from you.

But all of us as Christians, we know, we have this common understanding, I am a forgiven child of God. I'm no longer guilty.

I have to hang my head and walk around with my head down anymore. Another thing we have in common is we have assurance as Christians that we are children of God.

[12:19] We're not like everybody else in the world. We're children of God. Now and will be for all eternity. Sharing common experiences of any kind has a way of drawing people close together.

That's why people who play sports, they do things together. They work hard together. People who are in the band, people who, you know, are together at work and do some good things together. It just draws you together. This is a good reason why it's good for families to do all kinds of things together. Think about it.

Spring is not far and there's a lot of people in this room as spring comes you're going to be outside more. There's things you're going to need to do and want to do in your yard, in a garden.

Get your children involved. That is something that you can do together, work together. It can build good relationships.

[13:21] Your children need to learn to work so let them work with you and make it a positive experience. But don't let it all be work. Children and parents need to do some fun things together.

Play together. Find ways where you just laugh. You have fun. You do things that you all enjoy. It brings you together, doesn't it?

Even eating meals together. I know there can be some wars at the table but eating meals together can be that thing that sort of brings you together.

I'm not talking about just parents with children at home. I want to encourage you, you've got brothers and sisters, you've got parents, you have adult children, don't just all go your separate ways and lose the bond, the closeness that God intends for us to have until death takes people out. Do things with your adult children. Do things with your parents. Do things with your older brothers, grown brothers and sisters. Keep those relationships alive if you can, if they'll allow you to.

[14:35] Now, all of us who are members of this church have many common spiritual experiences that can be used by God to draw us closer together as a church family.

think about them sometimes. Talk about them. Some of your common spiritual experiences with one another and build something more than a shallow, superficial relationship.

Number two, to experience true Christian unity, we must develop a common Christian mindset. Not uniformity we talked about last week. Everybody's not going to think the same way about everything, but what we're talking about is something specific here.

Look, he says, complete my job of being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. To summarize what we looked at last week, the key for a church to experience family-like unity can be found in two statements.

Number one, we must love one another with self-giving love. If we're going to be a true family here, we've got to learn to love one another in this self-giving, patient kind of way and not go around with our feelings on our sleeves, least little slight, least little whatever, and we're offended and we withdraw.

[16:02] Look at what the kind of love we're talking about involves. Now, this also is the kind of love that we need to have in our homes, parents and children, children and parents, brothers and sisters.

Wake up, brothers and sisters. Look on this screen. Love is patient and kind. Love does 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 ends. This is the kind of love that we need to develop, we need to work on, really in all of our relationships.

What we're talking about here, among one another and always in your home. Second thing that will help us to be united, we must focus on our purpose and work together to accomplish it.

[17:08] We looked at this last week. I don't want to spill it. It's been a great deal on that. We exist for this. In the book of Acts, the first summary statement of what the church was doing, they were worshipping, evangelizing, learning, and loving.

That's what we're called to do. That's how we fulfill the great commission that the Lord has given us. You know, in a church family, we don't get to choose who we will or won't love.

It's like in your family. I mean, if you're going to really be a strong family, it doesn't matter what your brother or sister is like. They're your brother or sister.

And a lot of you have close interactions with more extended family. You're cousins. You don't get to choose who they are.

That's decided for you. And we just have to learn to love one another. And a lot of times and a lot of ways we do that at home. And what Paul's talking about is we've got to bring it to the church.

[18:18] We've got to love one another. Warts and all. Differences and all. Do you try to express this kind of love in some of the relationships that you already have here in this church?

Not be easily offended, but really give yourself to people this way. We're also called to fulfill the Lord's great commission by being this well church.

And I want to ask you this. Are you helping us do that in some way? Every Christian has spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities that God expects us, calls us, commands us to use in our church or through some of the ministries of our church to glorify Him, to help other people come to know Christ, to help people grow in their relationship with the Lord, to meet real needs that people have. How are you involved? I know we're not doing a lot right now because of the COVID situation, but how were you involved before we sort of put things on hold?

How do you plan to be involved when things pick back up and come to the, what will be a new normal? Let's look on now at the third way to build church unity.

[19:46] Look at this. To experience true Christian unity, we must work daily on our common Christian responsibility to humble ourselves. I want you to look at what he says here, verses three and four.

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 interest, but also to the interest of others. Let's look at the specifics here.

Number one, we can't promote ourselves over other people. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. Note two phrases. Number one, selfish ambition refers to self-promotion.

Conceit, or some translations you have, says vain conceit. It refers to seeking glory for yourself that is not deserved. Now the thought may come into your mind, don't seek glory for yourself that's not deserved.

How do I know if mine's deserved? Don't seek glory for yourself and you don't have to worry about it. Just don't seek glory for yourself. Call attention to yourself and you won't have to worry about whether it's deserved or not.

[20:57] You know, as I was, you know, studying this, thinking about this, we see it a lot in the sports world, especially among professional athletes. If you read a lot, watch things on ESPN and so forth, interviews, what people are saying about one another and so forth, there's a lot of professional athletes who complain about not getting the respect they deserve.

when I read a lot of these athletes making multi-million dollar salaries, living just totally ungodly lives and thinking of no one on the team but themselves, I think about how absurd it is for them to complain about, I don't get the proper respect I should.

There's one thing we need to make clear this morning. We can't demand respect of other people. You can't demand people around you respect you. Now let me take the time out here with exceptions.

The Bible calls us to respect our parents throughout their life. Boys and girls and all of us in this room if our parents are alive, it's our God-given responsibility to respect them.

And boys and girls at home, if you show disrespect to your mother or father, they need to just wear you out for your lack of respect and make you at least show respect for them as the authorities of the home because that is a God-given authority picture.

[22 : 46] There are God-given authorities in the scripture and parents are one, a main one who do, can make you as children, you've got to show me respect.

You may not mean it. They can't make you mean it. They can make you show it or suffer serious consequences and good parents will make their children show respect or suffer the consequences of not doing it.

That is important. But outside of the commands, the authority structures of the world, we can't demand respect. Respect is something we've got to earn by our character, by our work ethic, by the way that we treat other people.

You know, a lot of these professional athletes, they could, they would be respected more if they focus on being a better teammate, if they focus on being a better human being.

They would find that they're respected more within their team by their opponents, their coaches, their fans. If you want to develop closer relationships with people in your life everywhere, at home, church, wherever, don't promote yourself.

[24 : 10] arrogance is not becoming on anyone anywhere. Instead, look at this, we've got to humble ourselves. We must not think too highly.

We must not think of ourselves as being better than others, the second part of verse 3. But in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. I want to explain this with a story.

A.T. Robertson, in the early part of the 1900s, he was one of the most respected New Testament Greek scholars in the English speaking world.

He wrote about 25 books including a 1,500 page grammar of the Greek New Testament. He wrote a verse-by-verse commentary on the entire New Testament that explains the meaning of every major Greek word.

He was also a full-time professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He was up there with few peers as a scholar, as a Christian scholar in his day.

[25 : 21] His father-in-law was John Broadus. Broadus was one of the founders of Southern Seminary. He was also a New Testament scholar. He was respected but nowhere near the level of Robertson.

Now both were buried in the Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky. Broadus died first. Much older, so you would expect that.

He did. Broadus died first. His grave is marked by a towering monument erected by his family. That wasn't his desire, but his family chose to erect a monument over his grave.

Well, next to Broadus' monument is the flat, level with the ground grave marker of A.T. Robertson. It was Robertson's request to be buried in Broadus' shadow.

[26 : 27] And I read that, I just thought, what humility. A.T. Robertson knew who he was. He knew what he had accomplished.

He knew what his status was as a scholar in his day, and that brought us a great man. But nowhere near his level.

But he chose, requested, to be buried in what the world would say, a lesser man's shadow.

That's the kind of attitude that enables us to humble ourselves and count others more significant than ourselves.

that's the kind of attitude we need to demonstrate in this church and in our homes. Now, some husbands and wives need to work on this.

[27 : 29] I haven't got any kind of emails or letters or calls, but let me just say this, men. Let your wife and children decide if you should be treated like a king.

Don't you demand it. If you do, you're an arrogant rascal. Ladies, let your husband and children decide if you should be treated like a queen.

Don't demand it. It's unbecoming to be that prideful. Now, boys and girls, young people, teenagers, some brothers and sisters need to work on developing humility and counting their brother or their sister or their parents more important than me.

You hear that? And regardless of what your parents may say or do, you are not a princess or a prince. I know some of the parents today, you have this mindset, you treat your child, your girl as if she's some kind of princess that can do no wrong.

There's a few that even treat their boy as if he's some kind of prince who's never done wrong. Let me tell you about what your children are.

[29 : 03] Your children are selfish, self-centered sinners just like you are. And just like I am.

They can be arrogant, they can be selfish and self-centered, just like we all can be arrogant and selfish and self-centered.

It's hard to do, I don't know any kind of easy lesson, but we as parents, we need to model and then we need to teach our children how to humble themselves, not think they're some kind of prince or princess, and to think of others more significant than themselves.

Paul provides more details about what humility involves. Look at this, we must not be so self-centered that we fail to look out for the interests of others.

I want you to think about this. Look at the verse. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Note that he says we should not look only to our interests.

[30 : 21] Do you understand? It's just a part of human nature to take care of yourself. Jesus, talking about the second greatest commandment, said to love your neighbor as yourself. That is not a command to love yourself.

We already do. It's just human nature. We love ourselves. We look out for ourselves. In fact, in some ways, important ways, it's a part of our Christian responsibility to provide for ourselves and our family and not be dependent on other people.

We've talked about that in a day gone by. talking about the importance of working and saving and investing and the awful way that socialism will lead this country and ruin our lives.

I just had to throw that in a lot of the socialistic Congress and president that we have today. Just to throw it out there, keep it on people's minds. They are not looking out for our best interests as Christians in this world who desire to live according to the truth of God.

And we need to keep that in mind. Living humbly before others is not an easy thing to do. It is contrary to our selfish and self-centered sinful nature.

[31 : 42] But it can be done. There are no commands. There are no instructions in the Bible for us to do anything that we cannot do.

Paul is telling us here that we can't live this way as a church family. We can't have healthy families in our homes humbling ourselves, putting others first.

The key to doing this though is to first humble ourselves before God. I want you to look at this. Peter explains this in 1 Peter. He says, Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Boys and girls, teenagers, adults, God opposes the proud. God will humble the proud.

Make no mistake. He says, humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you. At the proper time he will exalt you.

[32 : 50] As we live in humble dependence upon God, he'll supply us with everything we need to obey him in this matter. One of the things that God will supply us is the Holy Spirit who lives in us if we're Christians.

It's the Holy Spirit's work to give us desires and then give us the ability to live this kind of life. In fact, Paul describes the work of the Holy Spirit, he talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

Some people describe the fruit of the Spirit as the character of Jesus. It's in Galatians chapter 5. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, these kind of things.

If we're Christians, the Spirit of God works within us to help us to develop. It's a lifetime endeavor to help us develop this kind of character. And by God's grace, we can make progress over time, trial and error.

Like Swindoll says, three steps forward, two steps back. But even that is progress. Now, based on what you see in this passage about growing closer together as a real church family, what do you need to do to make this happen here in our church?

[34 : 14] Or if God's spoken to you about making your home a closer-knit family, what do you need to do?

Would we be a closer church family if you would stop talking negatively or critically about other church members?

Would we be a stronger, closer-knit church family if you'd start saying positive things? Go out of your way to affirm people. Would your home be better?

Would your home be better if you just stopped that negative complaining, fighting with your brother or sister, whining to your parents, disobeying them?

Would we be a closer church family if you'd stop promoting yourself, trying to call attention to yourself? Would your home be stronger if you didn't try to make everything about you?
[35 : 25] Would we be a closer church family if you started paying attention to other people? Noticing something's not quite right. And because you love them and you care about them, you sort of, you try to inquire, is there something wrong?

Is there something I could help you with? And then you do. Would our church family be a stronger church family if we would inconvenience ourselves for the benefit of somebody else? Even make sacrifices of our time to serve somebody else, a brother or sister? I want you to think about it.

What is God calling you to do or stop doing to make us a closer church family? Well, I want to encourage you to obey Him.

And then, what's the Lord calling you to do or stop doing to make your home a closer-knit family?

[36 : 36] Make that commitment. It won't be easy. By God's grace, the indwelling Spirit of God, you can be the kind of church brother or sister that we need.

You can be the loving member of your home family that everyone needs and wants you to be. Let's pray and ask God to help us be there. Would you join with me? Dear God, help us to see right now how we should respond to you so that we can be contributing family members to a close, loving, serving together.

church family call, pickings first Baptist. And then, Father, show us parents, children, siblings, how we should respond to make our homes better, more positive, more loving.

Let's listen to the Lord and obey Him as we just go through a time, attitude of prayer, listen to God, take it seriously, and respond to Him.

[38 : 04] to God so far, listen to God. Right now, today, we need some things.

Come with us. Welcome to God. Let's pray for us. And that's right for you. Let's pray. Will — Please go ahead.

And there's not as is, you know? Oh, good reason. Just do love for you able to to transform.