

## BEING A FAMILY PART ONE

### 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

The primary reasons why Jesus died on the Cross was that we could be part of a community of people that no longer live for themselves but for one another.

To do so takes a radical change of mind and of way of life (**Romans 12:1-2**)

It means becoming part of a people who live not for our own selfish interests but for the interests of our new family in Christ (**Philippians 2:1-5**).

This is not an automatic process, however. It takes constant thought and study so that we can re-train ourselves out of selfish mindsets, individual personal spiritual mindsets, or even religious traditional mindsets.

Church is not a building or something we go to once or twice a week.

It is the collection of God's called out people, called to live a different way from the world around us.

***We are going to look at some of the key aspects of being God's family.***

### ***1. Living Like Family***

#### Acts 2:42-27

This is not a picture of a religious group in the first century; this was a group that was living like a family did with one another

What important elements do you see being embraced by this community that we can apply to our own time? Can you find at least five?

### ***2. Family Identity***

#### Luke 14:25-27

In certain contexts, such as this one, "love" and "hate" were used in Jesus' day as part of inheritance language

They took on the meaning of "embrace" as part of one's covenant family markers or "reject"

According to Jesus we must reject all the things of the world whether they be family, wealth, worldly inheritance, or even our own merits as markers of our relationship with God

The family of God found in Christ is the marker of our spiritual identity and status as God's people

This means that we find our security, comfort, identity, and source of honor from being part of

God's family and nothing else

### ***3. Loving Like Family***

**John 13:34-35**

Jesus calls his people to love (which according to 1 John 3:16 means that we lay our lives down for one another) each other

This will be the mark of who Jesus' true family is

In what ways can you love other disciples right now?

### ***4. Caring for One Another***

**Acts 4:34**

Families in New Testament times expected to care for another by sharing possessions with each other as each had need

This is the way that the early church lived and it is the expectation for God's people to provide for one another

**James 2:15-17**

What does James say about one who calls other Christians "brother and sister" but is unwilling to care for their physical and material needs?

Of course, this should be a relationship of mutual love and those who attempt to manipulate or abuse the situation should be lovingly dealt with (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13)

Does this still seem challenging for you? Why?

### ***5. Making Decisions as Family***

**Philippians 1:23-26**

Paul was torn between what he wanted to do for his own benefit and what would benefit the Christian family

He made his decision based on what was best for the entire family

When we truly embrace that God has given us a new family and that we belong to one another (Romans 12:5) we will desire to make decisions based on the benefit of the whole family and God's will (James 4:13-17) and not just what seems best for us

What does this mean practically as it applies to you?

Final Remarks; Let's leave as a special family

## **LOYAL TO ONE ANOTHER**

### **{STANDING WITH ONE ANOTHER} [PART TWO]**

Romans 8:28-29

Jesus came to create a family that would enter into his life and become transformed into his image

Christianity is not a solo sport but is, rather, a team sport.

We are called to live together as a loving family that demonstrates to the world, as best we can in this present age, what it will look like to live in the age to come and to live by God's values of that age.

This is the underlying ethic of the one another relationships that we seek to develop.

### **The Nature of Our Relationships**

John 13:34-35

- As members of God's family we are called to love one another

1John 3:16

- The defining characteristic of God's people is that we have sacrificial love for one another

Romans 12:1-16

What are we called to be in view of God's incredible mercy that he has shown us?

Why do you think that Paul connects being a living sacrifice with the concept of belonging to one another and being devoted to one another?

What do you think that Paul meant by saying that we belong to one another?

### ***GALATIANS 5:13-15***

What type of behavior are we called to here rather than indulging our own selfish interests?

- We don't have to worry about a bunch of rules or laws if we simply love one another

Why is the simple call to love one another more demanding than following a bunch of religious rules?

1 Corinthians 12:25-26

- A true family is connected and shares both honor and identity with one another

What we do within the body, even if that includes not coming to a gathering, effects everyone else in the body

What sort of characteristics and values must we have in ourselves in order to embrace this kind of life?

What sort of characteristics and values must we rid ourselves of so as to not stand in the way of living like this?

### *Our Debt to One Another*

Romans 13:8

What debt do we have in our relationships with one another?

To whom do we owe this debt? Who is the recipient of our paying off this debt?

How do we fulfill the law of Christ?

Romans 14:13-19

- It's easy to be judgmental towards one another but we are called to avoid that type of attitude
- Freedom in Christ means that we are free from the power of sin but it also means that we are free to work out with God what it means to love him and love others on an ongoing basis

If our freedoms should come in conflict with the sincere convictions of another brother or sister, which one should take priority?

Why do you think that God values unity within our relationships above personal freedom?

Romans 15:1-7

- All of our relationships with each other should be with the best interest of one another in mind

Eph 4:29

- Even the words we speak to one another should be measured carefully to ensure that they are with the interests of one another placed in the highest priority and to build one another up into Christ

When our "rights" clash with the best interests of our brothers and sisters in Christ, what should be our response?

What is more important: to love others or protect our individual rights and interests?

Hebrews 3:12-14

What responsibility do we bear towards one another according to this passage?

What are some practical ways that we can do this as brothers and sisters in Christ?

Hebrews 10:22-25

- This passage calls us to draw near to God and to hold to our faith unswervingly
- It immediately goes into practical ways of how to do that

What are we called to do in order to continue to draw near to God and hold firmly to the hope that we profess?

Why do you think that it is important to not give up meeting together?

## **BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER [PART THREE]**

A very dangerous problem that seeps into the hearts of many Christians is the idea that they should always be treated perfectly within the church.

We tend to look at the ideal life of Christ to which we are called and think that we will never be hurt within the church.

That's simply a false way of thinking, though. We must pay careful attention to the Scriptural calls to bear with one another through hurts and disappointments because they are promises that we will fail one another.

Knowing this helps us to defend our hearts against disillusionment which is one of the most powerful and dangerous human emotions.

### ***Prayer***

#### ***Ephesians 4:2-3; 16***

- Although we will be like Christ one day, what we will be has not been made entirely known yet and we are still in the process of being transformed (1 John 3:2)
- This means that as imperfect people, we will sin against one another, hurt one another, and disappoint one another—in fact passages like these practically promise that we will be hurt and let down

#### ***What should our response be at those times?***

#### ***Colossians 3:12-14***

- There is an assumption here, and a reality, that we will have opportunities to have grievances towards one another
- Our goal is to be prepared to forgive, love and live in peace with one another as much as is within our control (Hebrews 12:14-15)

#### ***Why is it so hard for us to forgive when others let us down?***

***1 Peter 2:19-24*** {some sufferings might be adjust} but we should still endure them anyway

How does this passage help direct our thoughts and attitudes during times when we feel that we have been mistreated, ignored, or let down? To entrust ourselves to God

#### ***Matthew 7:3-5***

- Jesus tells us that we should see other's sin as little and our sin as big

Is that the way that we usually do it?

How would it change things if we truly approached perceived hurts and wrongs at the hands of others as little things and saw our own sin as big and needing to be dealt with swiftly?

### ***Ephesians 3:10***

The church, with all of its flaws and mistakes, is the display of God's wisdom to the world

- God's wisdom through the church is not displayed by us all being perfect—even the world can get along with people that treat them imperfectly
- God's wisdom is shown when imperfect people bear with one another and remain loyal to one another because of our love for God

### ***1 Timothy 3:15***

- There is much about the church and our family in Christ that we will love and cherish but there will also be tough time—there will be times when we have to work against our emotions and put down our desire to be treated justly and seek unity and love rather than justice

What is another term used here for the church? {Family}

What do you think it means that the church is referred to as the pillar and foundation of truth?

Why is it important to remember that?

### ***1 Peter 4:9-10***

We should constantly look for ways to be hospitable towards one another, to give to one another, and to use our gifts to build one another up

When we use our gifts what does that enable God to pass through us to others? {God's grace}

If we do not use the gifts that God has given us we are denying that portion of God's grace to the rest of the body

### ***Challenge***

Who should you bear with today to fulfill the call from God? You can't be a Christian if you can't bear with others because neither God will bear with you.

## **RADICAL FORGIVENESS [PART FOUR]**

Genuine forgiveness is one of the most difficult things for a human being to do. Yet it is an absolutely vital aspect of life for those in Christ.

Forgiveness is not only necessary for the Christian community to function as God intends but also determines how God will act towards us.

If we refuse to forgive others then God will show us that same treatment.

Forgiveness, then, is not only something that we should understand well but something that we should embrace wholeheartedly.

## ***1. A GOD OF FORGIVENESS***

2 Chronicles 7:14

- God has always set an example of forgiveness
- Forgiveness is important because God forgives and calls his people to be likewise forgiving

Micah 7:18

- What does this passage tell us about the nature of God? He is a forgiver!
- Forgiveness is an act of mercy and only those who realise they need that mercy will give it out.
- We hurt God from time to time and he has emotions just like we have, he gets angry but not for long compared with us we even take years!

## ***2. WHY WE FORGIVE***

Matthew 18:21-35

- What important principle about forgiveness and mercy does this parable teach us?
- What is most difficult for you about forgiving others?
- How many times are we to forgive others?
- Why do you think Jesus used such an incredible number?

It is important to remember that the sins that others perpetrate against us, could never match up to the excessive of our debts and sin against God

- What stunning principle does Jesus lay out in verse 35?

God will never show mercy to those who are not willing to show mercy

***Why do you think God takes so seriously the concept of us forgiving others?***

***Matthew 6:14-15***

- Do you think that Jesus really meant this?
- What are the implications of this passage when it comes to our forgiveness of others?

You don't forgive neither God will forgive you, it is as clear as that.

Mark 11:25-26

- What does Jesus say to do if we need to forgive others?
- Why would forgiveness take precedence over the act of praying in a situation like this?

We forgive others so that the reality of stepping into God's presence and connecting with his will through prayer is not interrupted

If we are not living a life of forgiveness then we step out of God's reality and his forgiveness

- What are some of the things that stand in the way of you radically forgiving others?

Colossians 3:12-14

- We forgive because it is part of the life of Christ that we have put on when we died to self
- We have a portion of that life because Christ forgave us
- Refusing to forgive others demonstrates that we haven't really entered into the reality of the life in Christ and fully understood what God has done for us
- This doesn't mean that we just quickly give lip service forgiveness to others
- It demands that we deal with the depths of our hurt and bitterness and keep working towards true forgiveness from the heart

### ***Conclusions***

- Spend some more time truly contemplating the connection between God's forgiveness for us and our forgiveness for others

## **ACTIVELY FORGIVING [PART FIVE]**

Genuine forgiveness is not just a concept to be understood but something that we need to actively do in a biblical manner, motivated by God's forgiveness of us.

The previous study looked at our motivation for forgiveness. This study will look into the actual process of forgiving and letting go of the bitterness that actually accompanies it.

## ***1. IT IS UP TO US***

### ***Matthew 18:15-17***

This passage is directly addressed to situations in which we are personally sinned against

First, we are to talk to the other person, which often times means putting their interests ahead of our own because confronting someone can be extremely uncomfortable

This should always be done with an attitude of love

If the person does not listen, sit down in love with others, again for the benefit of helping the one who has sinned

If they still do not repent then the matter should be brought before the church

At each step the willingness to put their interests first, find reconciliation, and offer genuine forgiveness are to have priority

### ***Ephesians 4:31-32; Luke 17:3-4***

What does it mean that we are told to get rid of anger, rage, and bitterness?

We have responsibility in this

One of the ways that we really let go of bitterness towards others is to understand the depth of God's forgiveness for us

We can only truly forgive those who repent or acknowledge their guilt because forgiveness is the act of releasing a repentant person from the guilt and punishment of their offense (this is true for both God and us)

If someone doesn't repent, we cannot technically forgive them, but that doesn't mean that we get to hang onto anger and bitterness

We are still called to release that and wait for the time when they do repent so that we can forgive them

It is important to note that forgiveness doesn't mean acting like something never happened or removing the consequences of their sin but it means that we don't continue to judge a person based on past behavior of which they have repented

### ***For Example.***

If someone steals money in a situation where they were trusted but then genuinely repents from that sin, they can and should be forgiven and no longer be judged or looked down upon for their past action or treated as an offender.

- They might, however, need to serve a punishment such as jail time and should do so without fighting the consequences of their crime.
- They also should probably not be put in a similar position of trust and access to money for a long time to protect them from temptation.

There is no simple answer as to how long such a period of time should last but love and wise discernment should be applied.

### ***Matthew 26:27-28***

When we forgive others we announce to the world the ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness that God has made available to everyone

### ***Mark 2:5-7***

- Only God can forgive sins
- We don't forgive sins because sins are ultimately against God
- We forgive the wrong that has been done to us

What we do is to offer forgiveness for the hurts done to us; this points to, and is a picture of, the ultimate forgiveness for sin that we have in Christ

## **2. FORGIVENESS IN ACTION**

### ***2 Corinthians 2:5-11***

Paul gives a wonderful demonstration of the attitude of forgiveness in action

He had been wronged but is far more concerned with the good of the Corinthian's community from which the offender against him came and with the offender himself

Notice that Paul had embraced a heart of forgiveness so deeply that he wasn't even sure if he had anything to forgive

What can you learn specifically from Paul's example here?

***Acts 9:26-28***

Less than three years before this Paul had been a persecutor of the church and had Stephen, a beloved brother in this church, killed before their very eyes

Despite all of that, the Jerusalem church quickly forgave and accepted Paul, allowing him to move around among them as one of them

This is a picture of God's loving and forgiving family of which we are called to be a part

What would it take for you to be willing to embrace that kind of radical forgiveness?

***Conclusions***

Do you think forgiveness is the most challenging element for you?

If that so How can you go about turning that potential weakness into a strength?

What specific steps are you going to take to apply the things you have learned from these Scriptures?

## **FRIENDSHIPS IN THE BODY [PART 6]**

We are truly baptized into the body of Christ and called to be family with our brothers and sisters in Christ but one of the most important aspects to that can often be overlooked is the importance of being friends.

Yes, we worship together, serve together, glorify God together, and demonstrate God's wisdom to the world through the church but we must also learn that our brothers and sisters in Christ need to be our best friends and most important relationships that we can ever have.

It is they that will help us to become more like Christ and stay faithful until the resurrection.

## **THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FRIENDSHIPS**

Philippians 2:1-4

What is the foundation and source of the relationships between members of the body of Christ?

It's important to know that our friendships, our relationships, and the way we deal with one another all radiates from our connection with Jesus

Quiz

What does people of the world base friendships on?

- ★ Common interests
- ★ "Clicking" with one another
- ★ "Liking" one another and such of the kind!

Quiz

What should our friendships within the kingdom of God be based on?

This doesn't mean that we cannot like one another or have things in common but it does mean constantly reminding ourselves that friendships within the body of Christ are not based on worldly things and so will eventually be deeper but will also take more effort, care, and patience than friendships in the world which tend to come easy because we choose the people we want to befriend and stay away from the rest

The reality is that, at times, we will find people outside of the church that seem easier to be friend (and as long as we remain focused on bringing all people into reconciliation with God—2 Corinthians 5:14-21— then it is fine to have non-Christian friends)

Galatians 6:10

We must remember that those in Christ should receive the best of our time, our loyalty, and our hearts

If we apply this principle it will help us build and maintain our relationships and friendships within the body of Christ?

Romans 12:5-10

Quiz

- What does Paul say our relationship to one another is here?
- What does it mean to “be devoted to one another in love”?
- Why is it important to note that this is worded as a command?

Relationships and friendships in the body of Christ we radically give ourselves to one another

Hebrews 3:12-14

We should be involved in each other's lives to build great friendships

This will help us to have great fun and build great memories together, this element in our relationships in Christ is not usually found in normal friendships

1 Peter 4:8-10

Quiz

What is the result of loving one another deeply?

Biblically, hospitality referred to sharing everything you had with someone and welcoming them into your home, your life, etc.

Quiz

Why are we called to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling?

We minister God's grace to one another when we serve one another

Quiz

What happens if we don't serve one another, befriend one another, and love one another? It becomes hard to forgive them and build relationships

1 Corinthians 15:33

This important principle is actually referring primarily here to being around and listening to false teaching and doctrines but it is certainly true of all areas

Quiz

- Is there any "bad company" that you are tempted to spend large blocks of time with?

Quiz

- Jesus spent large amounts of time with "sinners" and "bad company" so how can we rightly reach out to and love the lost the way that Jesus did and still wisely apply this principle into our lives?

We must never overlook the fact that what is true for us is especially true for our children

If our best friendships and the best of our time need to be with believers then that is doubly true of our kids

This will often take more effort and sacrifice to make sure that their best friends are in the church

1 Corinthians 11:1

Quiz

- What should be the primary goal of our relationships within the body of Christ?

This must always be the ultimate focus and end of our relationships even as we have fun together and share great time and great memories—have fun but let it always be focused on becoming more like Christ

### ***Conclusions***

It is so important to choose to have your strongest relationships within the body of Christ because it has our bearing to make it to Heaven