

“The Church as a Family”

May 27, 2018

Bible Verses

1. John 13:35 NLT - 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

2.
Ephesians 4:1-4 NLT - 1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

3.
Romans 12:3 ESV - 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Ephesians 5:21 NLT - 21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

4.
Psalm 145:4 NLT - 4 Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power.

INTRODUCTION

You have probably heard that the church is not the building, it is the people you find there. But how do you view your relationship to those people? Do you see them as your “family”? God does. When we truly embrace that perspective, it will radically change our lives. Despite the challenges of living it out, the church that views itself as a family is a richer expression of the Kingdom of God.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Describe the quirkiest member of your family?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Ideal versus Real Families

1. Read John 13:35

The Bible is filled with family imagery. In an ideal family the head of the household would be a godly example, passing the faith to the next generation, honoring those in their family by leading with grace. Where would you say the following heads of their families succeeded and where did they fall short of this ideal: Adam, Abraham, King David. (If you don't know their stories well, they all had their shortcomings.) Amazingly Jesus' lineage is tied back to these imperfect and messy people.

When we view each other as God's family and Jesus as the head, we find an example of what an ideal family could be. In fact, how does John 13:35 tie together our discipleship and our relationship to one another? Is it easy? No, but we can't have an authentic encounter with Jesus, recognize we are all brothers and sisters, and yet refuse to love one another.

Maintaining Unity

2. Read Ephesians 4:1-4

When Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus he was well aware that our faults can get in the way of loving one another. In verse 2 he outlines the attitudes we need to maintain in order to be worthy of God's

calling. Of these three qualities, which is the greatest challenge for you personally; being humble, gentle or patient? What are some particular circumstances that you find make it more difficult to maintain these attitudes?

Paul goes on to encourage the Ephesians to make every effort to maintain unity because he knows there will be opposition. Can you list some of the common issues that cause separation, polarization and disunity amongst the church? According to Paul, what gives us the strength to be unified despite these things?

Tactics that Destroy the Church Family

3. Read Romans 12:3

We don't have to look far to discover some of the common ways our unity as a family of believers is undermined. For instance, rather than supporting humility, the world around us promotes arrogance. Rather than feeling secure and cared for by the church we are fearful.

What are some ways advertising or social media, reinforces arrogance? (e.g. What's in your wallet? Or crafting the perfect Instagram post.) Another subtler means of dividing us is to play on our fears. How do you think the fear of not being needed or wanted can divide a church along generational lines?

Me versus Us

4. Read Ephesians 5:21

If the church is going to function like a family, then we must think differently than the world. Let's strive to follow Jesus' example of humility and self-sacrifice. As Jesus demonstrated through His own life, the focus is on others, not on ourselves.

What is one way that more mature Christians can willingly accommodate the younger believers in church? Conversely, how can younger believers benefit from the more mature members of the congregation? Do you regularly connect with others who are not in your generation?

What are some of the ways you see yourself expressing care, connectedness and commitment to others at New Life?

WRAP-UP

The church should be a family; deeply loving, multi-generational and full of grace even for the members that annoy us. We're not perfect, and it's not easy, but God calls us to love one another expressed through our care, connectedness and commitment. Just as our natural family makes accommodations for the needs of its young ones, the mature believers need to model an attitude of self-sacrifice to paint a picture of how the younger generation should live. This attitude stands in opposition to what the world tells us, but we should make every effort to live in unity because we are a richer expression of the Kingdom together.

Memory Verse

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples
- John 13:35 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

"Challenge- Is there someone you need to disciple, care for, encourage or just include in your life? Be willing to ask them the tough question "What can I do to help? Both of you will be blessed.