

4. Jesus' Kingdom is our Mission

Romans 12:14-18 NLT - 14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! 17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

The result of investing your time in developing relationships and affection for others is a life that bears witness to Jesus' Kingdom.

In this passage we see many ways to demonstrate the reality of God's Kingdom among us. Hopefully our mission in life is that we would live this way. See if you can name people who you have seen living this out.

WRAP-UP

The world tells us we are consumers of religion, just going to church to find what pleases us. But it is God's desire to see us as one unified committed body of believers, the family of God, genuinely loving and caring for one another; a reflection of His love and care for us. But to get to that point we must faithfully lay down our lives as a sacrifice to God and His people, sharing our gifts and investing time in relationships and developing a genuine love that demonstrates Jesus' Kingdom to the world.

Memory Verse

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
- Romans 12:10 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: _____

Challenge- As you rise each morning this week, ask God "How do I join in what You are doing through Your "family" today?"

"The Family of God" Chapters #3

INTRODUCTION

New Life is a big church. And sometimes that can make it difficult to feel connected. But God's plan is for us to be so closely connected that we feel like a family. That means investing ourselves and developing relationships. Of course, that view is pretty counterculture. The world would tell us we are consumers looking for an experience tailored to our personal needs. God doesn't want us to just "go to church", He wants us to "be the church"; the family of God.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Besides your biological family, what group of people do you feel closest to?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. God's plan always includes "We"

God never intended for us to be alone. So, he placed us in a body of believers, the family of God. The Old Testament is filled with instruction about how we are to live with one another, and in the New Testament Paul spends a lot of energy solving issues that divide the communities of believers. So, we see that community must be very important to God.

As you read through Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-23, what do you see as His motivation for wanting unity amongst believers?

John 17:20-23 NLT - 20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. 22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

When Jesus invites us into relationship with Him, he simultaneously invites us to be a part of a community who also knows Him; a part of His family. The relationship Jesus desires for all of us is the type of perfect relationship that exists between God the Father and Jesus the Son. That relationship is so different from what the world normally sees that it will be the evidence that God loves us.

Have you ever been in a community of believers that you felt a special closeness to? How was that expressed?

Unfortunately, we don't always act like we belong to God's family. Paul described how different our lives should be from the world around us in Romans 12:1-5.

Romans 12:1-5 NLT - 1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. 2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. 3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. 4 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Paul says not to behave like the world but be a new person with changed thinking. What worldly thinking does he warn us about in verse 3? If all the members of Christ's body belong to each other (v.5), how does that change your expectation of how we treat each other in church, especially those who have different opinions, preferences and agendas than you do? What are some things we might do that demonstrate that we truly care about others in our church body more than ourselves?

2. What does it take?

Living a life devoted to God and His people takes faithfulness. God uniquely crafted each one of us and placed us in a body of believers

where we can give the unique gift of ourselves so that we all might benefit. Paul lists some of those unique gifts in Romans 12:6-8.

Romans 12:6-8 NLT - 6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Do you know the unique gifting God has placed in you? If you are unsure, ask your group what they see God has placed in you. How have you been using that gift lately, and how might you use it even more?

3. Love is Our Language

Romans 12:9-13 NLT - 9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

The language that connects you with your family is love. But Paul knows it is easier to fake it and pretend we love than it is to actually develop relationships with others that allows us to genuinely care about them.

Relationships deepen when you invest time in them. And when you deepen your relationships, your affection grows. Is there someone in your group that you would like to know better? Find one person to connect with this week to walk, talk, do lunch or have coffee, with the sole purpose of getting to know them better.