

## The Church as a Family: 3/3

### Intro:

1. We have been engaged in a study of the Church as the Lord would have it:
  - a. When Christ and His apostles repeatedly used Illustrations of a family to describe different relationships among the church they were doing more than offering explanations:
  - b. Disciples are promised the blessing of a large, extended Kingdom family, (Mk 10) and we want to make sure that we are fulfilling that obligation to each one here
  - c. We've looked at some of the basic functions of a physical family, such as companionship, edification, teaching, etc. and how the Church family is to provide those as well (*see pt 2/3 outline for examples and verses*) as well as some suggestions on how to accomplish these duties--(*which all revolved around spending time together*)
  - d. What we want to spend that final portion of this study considering is the ramifications of either working together towards this goal, or letting it fall by the wayside:
2. As with any command of the Lord, if we faithfully carry it out, (*Lev. 26:3-4*) there will be blessings that follow: and if we neglect it, we will ultimately face some sort of consequence-- as is always the case when we ignore God's plan:
  - a. That is easier to see with some commands than others (ie. Don't murder, commit fornication, falsehood, drunkenness etc)
  - b. And yet, perhaps it is more difficult for us to imagine the consequences of failing to grow as a family because they don't come to mind as immediately or as drastically.
  - c. Rest assured, they are no less severe:

### I. Acting as a Family... Affects our Communication:

#### ***A. Communication can be difficult enough to begin with...***

1. Throughout scripture we are warned repeatedly about the dangers we can cause with our Speech:
2. The remedy for this always seems to be practicing extreme caution and wisdom by guarding the words we speak carefully: (*Pro. 13:3, Ecc. 10:14, Matt. 13:36-37, James 1:19, James 3*)

3. And yet these passages only address the difficulties of your own personal speech; this becomes exponentially more difficult when more people are brought into the equation:
4. Many of the passages, esp. in Proverbs are simply describing our speech on a day to day basis... consider the greater import of discussing matters of eternal consequence
5. When You factor in the many differing opinions, backgrounds, and personalities of all the members in a local church, you have the potential for an explosion! This is why Paul exhorted Disciples to carefully consider their speech, and make sure that it fell into the category of edification: (*Romans 14:9, Eph. 4:29, Col. 4:6*)

***B. The degree to which we have drawn together with our fellow disciples as brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers will have a direct impact in our success:***

1. As we mentioned previously, it may take us getting to a certain point in our lives to understand this-- but nobody knows us better than our family (*generally speaking*)
2. Communication with family is often easier because despite the difficulties you may have in expressing your thoughts and emotions, you are still able to convey them, in part because the person you are speaking to really knows you: (*Illus. of the Spirit helping our prayers to the Father*)
3. Additionally, misunderstandings are less frequent or are of far less duration among family members: (They may have said “this”, but you know they meant “that”)

***C. What does this look like in the Church Family?***

1. A close family is able to avoid conflicts and disputes over hurt feelings through miscommunications that come by not knowing a brother/sister well enough to understand what they are saying
2. A close family is able to avoid major disputes that come when trying to work through difficult problems: We won't find ourselves suddenly shocked by a person's traits as though they were a stranger, when in the heat of duress
3. A close family is able to accomplish edification through speech because they know each other well enough to know what needs to be said.
4. A family that fails to draw near to each other, will suffer misunderstandings, confusion, and will often cause each other to be torn down

## II. Acting as A Family... Affects our Longsuffering

### ***A. Much like our speech, scripture has a wealth of exhortations for our patience:***

1. And while a great many of those deal with our patience in suffering, or waiting on the Lord, there are a many that deal with patience towards our fellow man:

*(Proverbs 15:18, Ecc 7:8b)*

2. Patience can be difficult to achieve! Paul exhorts his brethren that it is a quality that must be present in the body of Christ! (*1 Cor. 13:4, Gal. 5:22, Col. 3:12, 2 Tim. 4:2*)

### ***B. Consider how difficult it is to show patience towards strangers vs family***

1. While we are speaking in generalizations, it can be far easier to throw longsuffering by the wayside when it comes to strangers: (In traffic, in line at the grocery store, on the phone, in confrontation...)
2. When confronted with a situation that requires patience, it is far easier to put everything on the line because you have nothing invested in a stranger: You are not going to lose a relationship because of your impatience:

### ***C. What does this look like in a Church Family?***

1. Members who are invested in each other as brethren are able to show patience through misunderstandings and communication in general:
  - a) We don't like it when someone takes something a family member says out of context: "*If you know them then you'd understand they'd never mean it that way*"-- we wish that others would show patience towards them, or us
  - b) Brethren who know each other are able to exercise patience because they know their family member's personalities: (*Makes it easier to listen to preaching, teaching, rebukes, advice*)
  - c) Brethren who are apart, will consistently lose their patience with brethren during misunderstandings and communication, which will only foster more of the same:
2. Members who have drawn together will show patience in guiding each other back to the right path:
  - a) There is a difference between a disciple who is struggling to do right, and one who has rejected the light and is actively walking in darkness:

- (i) When someone is heading towards the latter, our actions must reflect it  
(*Jude 23*)
- b) But the path of correction is not always “full steam ahead, guns blazing, cannons firing” (*2 Tim 2:24-25; 4:2, 1 Thess. 5:14, etc.*)
- c) Brethren who see each other as a family, are going to work patiently and kindly with those who are weak, those are trying to follow God but still have much to work on: (*this is ALL of us to a degree*)
- d) Brethren who are more strangers than family will consistently show a lack of patience with each other through the growing process, further stunting the growth of weak disciples.

### **III. Acting as a Family... Affects our Endurance:**

#### ***A. We are well versed in passages of endurance...***

1. Something the Apostles encouraged Disciples to have, and frequently exhorted (*Acts 11:23, 1 Cor. 15:1-2, Gal. 6:9, Rev. 3:5-- a paltry sampling of passages from the whole*)
2. And yet... many disciples are perfectly happy with the concept of “Enduring hardship... as long as its not the brethren”

#### ***B. It is easier to “quit” on something you’ve not invested in:***

1. Why is it that every time a natural disaster comes... there will *always* be some that absolutely refuse to evacuate??? (*Harry R. Truman-- St. Helens, 100’s in Katrina -- theres nothing here!, Sandy.*)
2. These are people that, in spite of the coming danger, refuse to leave what they consider to be their whole life!
3. What would it be like if more Disciples viewed their Church family as central to their lives?

#### ***C. What this looks like in a Church:***

1. There are areas of the country where there are 10, 20, 30, even 40 or more congregations in a county, or even city!... Many times this is not a good thing-- but the result of splits and divisions among *faithful* brethren:
2. Consider the Church at Sardis in Rev. 3:1-5

- a) This church is full of hypocrites! There are weak Christians! There are sinners here! Take your garments and go?
- 3. We are not saying that there will never, under any circumstance be a good reason to leave a congregation--> But what we are saying is that there is no example found in scripture of Disciples being told to pack up and leave their brethren:
- 4. What we do find is brethren being told to straighten up, work things out, and fix the problems among them! (*Phi. 4:2-3*) We see faithful brethren like those in Sardis urged to remain faithful and strive to be an influence for good in the Church
- 5. A congregation that is made up of members completely invested in each other will weather storms:
  - a) Those may be periods of working to achieve unity in our understanding of scripture
  - b) It may be periods where we are working through a major disagreement, or dealing with a serious issue of removing leaven from the lump
  - c) It will always be a disgrace for a body to divide over petty disputes or because people can't get along: Family members are not willing to give up on each other and go somewhere else at the drop of a hat:
- 6. (*Illus. of membership in NRA...*) A congregation made up of Disciples who view themselves as "members" instead of *family members* will feel no remorse at picking up and going somewhere else:

*Conclusion:*

- i. *This is just a very small list of how the family relationship affects a congregation.*
  - a. *This list is much more extensive:*
    - i. *Evangelism: John 13:35*
    - ii. *Appointing Elders: Do you know these men?*
    - iii. *Cooperation, Unity of purpose and vision... etc*
  - b. *The point should be clear though: a Church Family is vital for growth and being sustained*