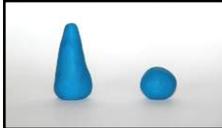


On Purpose, 5

Formed for His Family

Chapters 15-17; June 29, 2008

IT'S PEOPLE!



Last week we talked about friendship with God. Today, we're talking about our friendships with one another.



Four years ago, we gave everyone a little lump of clay and two Q-tips. We then had 90 seconds to use the clay and Q-tips to make a church. People were quite confused by the Q-tips.



Here's how to make a church with clay and Q-tips:

1. First, mold the clay into a cone and a ball.
2. Break the Q-tips in half, and poke the ball.
3. Arrange all four Q-tip pieces into the cone.
4. And then, stick the ball on top of the cone.



The church is a body, not a building. Some people got it right. And of course, Kenny Beane not only got it right, he's just an overachiever!



Together we form the "body" of Christ. Paul says that, as church members, we are each vital organs or limbs of this one body.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. - *Romans 12:4-5 NIV*

We are called, to *not* just *believe*, but to "belong" to the body. The entire Bible shows us God knitting His people together, to build a family who will love, honor, and reign with Him forever.

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family ... -
Ephesians 1:5 NLT



This is an essential aspect of our created purpose. We were formed and fashioned for God's family. When we're born, we can't grow, develop, and mature naturally without the support of a family to nurture and care for us.



Same goes when we're "reborn" - when we receive Jesus as Savior. We need kinships, relationships, and fellowships, to support our *spiritual* growth, development, and maturity.

The only orphans in God's family are self-exiled.

Our relationship with God should be *personal*, but it was never intended to be *private*. I simply can not fulfill my created purpose on my own.

[Christ] makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. - *Ephesians 4:16 NLT*

Just as organs and limbs can't *possibly* fulfill their function and purpose without being connected to a body, neither can we. Do any of you remember the two men in the news a few years ago whose arms had to be reattached after a tug-of-war accident?



Over 1600 men in Taipei took part in a tug-of-war contest. Together they exerted over 176,000 pounds of force on a two inch nylon rope capable of withstanding about 57,000 pounds of force. Two of the men wrapped the rope around their arms for more leverage. And when the rope snapped, the recoil instantly took their arms off. We've pixilated the severed arm, but it's still quite gruesome! Why is this photo so disturbing and horrific?!

Because it's so *wrong*; it's so tragic; it's so unimaginable; limbs are *not supposed* to be disconnected from the body!



The limb shrivels and dies; the body becomes crippled! This is how the Lord must feel when He sees one of us detached from *His* body. Limbs need a body and so do we. And Satan must relish detached limbs! Body parts unplugged from the life of the body; slowly shriveling and dying on their own. Many believers accept the lie that a "good Christian" doesn't need to commit themselves to, and regularly attend a local body!

[Jesus said] Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." - *John 13:35 NLT*

This is big: if I'm not committed to *loving* other believers (and love always shows itself in our actions), I will *not* be able to fully demonstrate my commitment to Christ!

Q: What specific group of disciples are *you* committed to?

Q: Who do you encourage and pray for on a regular basis?

Q: Who knows your secrets and holds you accountable?

Most of us have memorized John 3:16; say it with if you know it:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. - *John 3:16 NIV*

Q: But, how many of you know *First* John 3:16?

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. - *1 John 3:16 NIV*

The person who says, "I don't need church" is either arrogant or ignorant. I can't imagine saying to someone (let alone *Jesus*), I love *You* ... but I can't stand *Your* body!



It may seem easier to be holy when no one's around to frustrate your preferences ... but that's just a *virtual* holiness! We're called to love real people *not* ideal people. It's easy to fool ourselves into thinking that we're spiritually mature when there's no one around to challenge us or upset us.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another ... - *Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV*

A healthy walk with God *requires* that we have close fellowship with irritating, frustrating, imperfect people (just like *ourselves!*) in order to develop the skill of loving as Christ loves.



Life is all about love! And because God *is* love, one of the most crucial lessons we can learn on this earth is how to love others. When we love we are most like Him. This is why love is the foundation of *every* Christian command!

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." - *Galatians 5:14 NIV*

- A. The first purpose of life: Learn to love God.
- B. The second purpose of life: Learn to love man.

When a religious expert tested Jesus by asking Him to name the *greatest* of the commandments, Jesus couldn't name just one, because the first two are too closely related to be separated.

Jesus replied, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" - *Matthew 22:37-39 NIV*

On the deathbed, no sane person has ever said, "Bring me my bank book, my diplomas, my awards, my trophies, my jewelry ..." What do the dying want to be surrounded by? People; family; loved ones.



In our final moments - if we're clear-headed - every one of us will realize that relationships are what life was all about. Wisdom is learning this sooner rather than later. The point of life is love.

And the best way to spell love is "T-I-M-E"!



When our schedules get overloaded, we usually start skimming relationally, cutting back on giving the time and energy and attention that healthy relationships require. Too often the important is displaced by the urgent.

If you want to know a person's priorities, all you have to do is to take a look at how they use their pre-deathbed time!



You can always make more money, but you can't make more time; each of us has been given a set amount. Your time *is* your life.

So, be careful how you spend it, and who you spend it on!

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. - 1 John 3:18 NLT

Whenever you give your time, you're making a sacrifice; and sacrifice is the essence of love. This is why time is such a great and God-pleasing gift to give to someone.

Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. - Ephesians 5:2 NLT

The best use of life is love. And the best expression of love is time.

If we're going to live life "on purpose" we must understand:

1. I was formed for God's family

Q: How can you treat other believers more like *family members*?

2. I am called to belong to a body

Q: How much commitment does your involvement demonstrate?

3. Life is all about love

Q: What does your calendar confirm that you care about most?