

Purpose Driven Life, V

Formed for a Family (Chpt 15-17)

March 7, 2004

IT'S PEOPLE!

Q: Remember making crafts in Sunday school?

Now you have to sit in big church and listen to lectures, and you don't get to play with clay ... well, today is different! [Hand out colored clay and Q-tips]

- You'll have 90 seconds to make a church.
- You can use any or all of your supplies.
- Then you'll show them to your neighbors.

Q: Ready? Go! [Countdown timer]

- Time's up! Show your church to your neighbors.

Here's the kind of thing I was looking for: First, I made a cone and a ball. Then I poked two holes in the ball. Then I put the Q-tips in the cone and stuck the ball on top.

- The church is a body, not a building

Remember Charlton Heston in *Soylent Green*? It's people!

Q: Did anyone make a person?

Q: [To Ken] How'd you do? [Ken: Take a look: photo of clay Ken]

- I'll give you all 30 seconds to rebuild your churches.
- This week's reading assignment was chapters 15-17 (not 18).
- It's all about our relationship to each other as believers.

Together we form the body of Christ. Paul says that, as church members, we're each vital organs or limbs of 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're called not to just believe, but to belong.

PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

- Part of my created purpose is to join God's family

When we're born we become part of the human race; but we need a family to nurture us and care for us as we grow.

When we're *reborn* we become part of the Christian race; and we need a *spiritual* family to nurture and care for us as we grow.

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. - *Ephesians 1:5 NLT*

Our earthly families are temporary, fragile gifts from God; easily broken or disrupted by divorce, distance, and death. But our spiritual family - our relationships to one another and to every other believer - will continue throughout eternity.

For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. - *1 Peter 1:4 NLT*

Q: Do you know what all our inheritance consists of?

Maybe we could use a reading of the will ... read with me:

- I **WILL** get to live with my Lord forever
- I **WILL** be transformed to be like Christ
- I **WILL** receive eternal Heavenly rewards
- I **WILL** be freed from all pain and death
- I **WILL** bask in the glory of God forever

Our relationship with God should be personal, but it was never intended to be private. We are connected to every believer, and called to nurture and encourage one another.

- None of us can fulfill God's purposes by ourselves.

Just as organs and limbs can't fulfill their function and purpose without being connected to a body, neither can we.

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*

Our culture of independent individualism has created a lot of spiritual orphans who deemphasize the value of Christ's body.

FIVE REASONS TO JOIN

There are five reasons for joining and supporting a specific body of believers (whether here or somewhere else).

1. It identifies me as a genuine believer

It proves that I'm committed to my *adopted* brothers and sisters in reality, not just in theory. We really can't claim to be following Christ if we're not committed to a group of disciples.

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

We need each to express this witness.

- Love can not be realized or revealed in isolation

We've been given *family responsibilities* to love each other, pray for each other, encourage, admonish, welcome, serve, teach, accept, honor, forgive, and submit to each another.

Q: Who are you doing these things with?

2. It moves me out of self-centered isolation

Most of us have memorized John 3:16 (For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son), but are you aware of *1st 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*

Jesus expects us to imitate his example and offer our lives for one another. And, if we're going to partner with Christ:

- We must grow from spectator to participator.
- We must grow from consumers to contributors.

We'll never grow to maturity just by attending Sunday services.

Q: In what ways are you laying down your life for others?

3. It helps me develop my spiritual "muscle"

God wants us to learn to love real people - not ideal people.

It may seem easier to be holy when no one else is around to frustrate your preferences, but that's an untested holiness.

- Real maturity always shows up in relationships

It's easy to fool ourselves into thinking that we're mature if there's no one to challenge us.

We have to be in close fellowship with irritating, frustrating, imperfect people (like ourselves!) in order to develop the skill of loving as Christ loved.

4. It allows me to contribute to Christ's mission

When Jesus walked the earth, God worked through His physical body; today He uses Jesus' spiritual body.

... becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted 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*

As we become a vital part of the life of His body, we begin to:

- View others through His eyes.
- Speak to them with His grace.
- Care for them with His hands.
- And love them with His heart.

5. It helps keep me from backsliding

I was searching "tug-of-war" on Google Images, and came across a horrible (yet fascinating) photo of a man whose arm had to be reattached after a tug-of-war accident.

When a limb is severed from its body it will shrivel and die. It just can't exist on its own; and neither can we. Whenever we become careless about our connection to our church body (fellowship), everything else begins to slide too.

- Inconsistent attendance is a symptom of spiritual decline

Satan loves detached limbs, unplugged from the life of the body; sheep isolated from and unaccountable to the flock, because they're usually defenseless against his tactics.

The Christian life is more than just commitment to God through Christ; it includes a commitment to His children as well.