

Social Relationships in a Local Congregation

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Introduction: The local church should be a powerful tool in the building of Christians.

- A. The Lord described the relationship of Christians as being far more than just attendance at assemblies.
 - 1. When Paul became part of the church at Jerusalem he was with them “coming in, and going out.” (**Acts 9:28**)
 - 2. The church at Jerusalem was known for their association in the homes. (**Acts 2:46-47**)
 - 3. How can we possibly come to know each other if we only associate at the times of our assemblies? Many refuse to open their homes and lives.
- B. When you deal with people and their relationships, you are dealing with a sensitive area.
 - 1. When you become a Christian, the Lord must be master of all, including your relationships! Are you willing to let Him lead you in this area?
 - 2. We need the help from the Lord to know how to best work with one another.
 - 3. Why would Paul give attention in the letter he wrote to the Philippians to a disagreement between two women? (**Phil 4:1-2**)
 - 4. I have found that one person with the wrong attitude or one problem left unresolved can, in time, affect an entire church. (**Heb 12:15**)

I. The Ideal versus the Real

- A. The Lord wants us to be a close knit, loving group that is acutely aware of the needs of each other. (**1 Cor 12:22-26**)
 - 1. How can we accomplish this in our rushed society?
 - 2. The only way this can be done is for each of us to be crucified. (**Gal 2:20**)
 - 3. When we identify ourselves and those who are Christians by the cross, then all other human distinctions and advantages becomes rubbish.
- B. You will not open your hearts to one who does not care about you.
 - 1. That was true in your becoming a Christian! Each of you met someone who had a genuine concern for your soul.
 - 2. In our growth as a Christian, this same love is essential to our growth and edification.
 - 3. Our Lord described that love, above all others, as the identifying mark of His people. (**John 13:34-35**)
- C. In practice, this love is hard to build and difficult to maintain.
 - 1. Paul had to admit the difference between the unselfish love of Timothy, and the attitudes of other preachers. (**Phil 2:19-21**)
 - 2. How would the Lord describe you? Are you selfishly satisfied or are you looking to serve others?

II. On the Outside Looking In

- A. Humans have used the social arena as a source of power and punishment.
 - 1. Excluding others from can provoke all kinds of reactions in them.

2. Paul knew that Satan wants to separate a Christian from others and then to fill him with anger, bitterness and even guilt. **(2 Cor 2:6-11)**
- B. We should do everything we can to reach out to others.
1. The first time I visited a church in college was a memorial one.
 2. Sometime people make it impossible for you to reach out to them.

III. Some Common Problems that Churches Face

- A. The haves and the have-nots.
1. The early church had several occasions where this became a problem.
 2. One of the problems with the Corinthians was in this area. **(1 Cor 11:20-22)**
 3. James described attitudes within the assembly. **(James 2:1-8)**
 4. I have seen churches where groups of couples go on trips to ski resorts, cruises and other expensive trips. It is not wrong to do this, nor should one stop this because others cannot afford it.
 5. If you exclusively associate with the rich, then you do not have the heart of our Lord **(Mt 11:5)**. (Ex – Wal-Mart)
- B. The satisfied.
1. Because we are happy might lead us to neglect others. (Ex. Visitor to services)
 2. What would Jesus do? **(Phil 2:3-4)**
- C. Attitudes from parents to Children.
1. We need to teach our children to include others that are “difficult” in our activities because that is exactly what our Lord wants us to do! **(Mt 5:46)**
 2. There are Parents who became bitter towards another couple or even towards a child, and in both spoken and in unspoken actions encouraged their children to snub and exclude other children.
 3. If this is not corrected, a church will stand in danger of losing an entire generation.

IV. Be quick to identify and resolve these kind of problems.

- A. When problems arise in a local church in the relationships between Christians, it is crucial that the leadership address these issues with haste.
1. If ignored, they will only grow until the assemblies of the church become contrary to the encouragement it ought to be.
 2. Have you ever been distracted in your worship because of these things?
- B. The early church successfully faced challenges like this.
1. The neglect of the Greek widows in the church at Jerusalem was quickly recognized and corrected **(Acts 6:1-7)**.
 2. The apostles were quick to point out occasions of neglect and preference.
- C. Learn, like David, to look to God for deliverance. **(Psa 31:11-16; 2 Tim 4:16-17)**

Conclusion: Where do you see yourself?

“Christians state glibly that they love the whole world, while they permit themselves animosities within their immediate world. World love is a philosophical credo. But loving the world at large can only be done by loving face to face the world that is not so distant.”