

Family

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to take our usual break from Philippians right now, and we're going to continue on the third word that we had for this year. Three words that we had were character, order, and family.

These are words that we prayed for, like, God, what do you have to say to Christ's church this year? And so those are words we're focusing on. Giving a message on each one. So this is the last of the three. We're going to speak this morning on family, church as family.

What does healthy family look like in a church? And we'll just jump in right away by starting with a bunch of verses. Kind of lay the groundwork for why church must be family.

A lot of people have different views on church. They have different kind of things that they might say they believe about church, and then they have different things that they actually realistically experience with church.

Most often church is equated with a building. Maybe secondly, church is equated with a church service. But church primarily is a people. And that particular people is described in a particular way, in multiple different ways.

[1 : 0 5] And one of those ways is as a family. So let's look at this. First of all, this happens because of the gospel. John 1, verse 12 says, To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Okay? We're children of God. God is our father, and we now have a family. When you preach the gospel and then don't have an experience of the gospel with real people, then we kind of betray the message of the gospel.

God never meant to have his messages be just kind of this gnostic kind of spiritual reality just floating in the ether. He wanted Christianity to be a flesh and blood thing.

And he went so far that the lengths at which he went to show that that's what he means when he talks about us becoming children of God was that he became a man himself. The word became flesh.

That's how flesh and blood this thing is. God actually did that himself. So we always need to remember that. But God, as a father, wants to adopt us into his family through the gospel.

[2 : 1 5] And so he gives us the right to become the children of God. Galatians 3, 26 says, For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. And so we're children of God.

We're sons of God. That makes us family with one another. Okay? If we're all children of the same father, by definition that makes those people the same family.

Correct? Correct. In Mark chapter 3, Jesus talks about his natural family. And we think about our spiritual family, those people who have been purchased by Jesus and are children of God.

But we also, our reference point for family is natural family. Jesus was confronted with his natural family coming to him in Mark chapter 3, verse 31. It said, His mother and his brothers came.

And standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And he answered, Who are my mother and my brothers?

[3 : 16] And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

Again, Jesus is taking natural family and taking it one step further and saying, When those who are children of God, those who are doing the will of God, there's a level of family there that's even stronger than blood.

Now, if you have blood who are believers as well, you get double there, right? But there's a family that's stronger than mere blood, and that is those who do the will of God.

And Jesus defines it that way and says, Here's my brother and sister and mother. So spirit is thicker than blood. Spiritual family is of profound importance, especially when Jesus makes such a profound statement like that.

That was a radical thing to say. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait, what? You're saying these people who do the will of God? These are family in a greater way than even your mother and your brothers?

[4 : 23] Profound thing. Okay? We see this bleeding out through the epistles. Paul talking to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5. Verse 1, he says, Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him.

How? How are you to encourage him? Encourage an older man as you would a father. Then he says, Encourage younger men as brothers. Older women as mothers.

Younger women as sisters. Okay? He's basically saying, Relate to one another as family. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters. Okay? Hebrews 2.11, Speaking of Jesus, it says, For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all of one source.

That is why he, speaking of Jesus, is not ashamed to call them brothers. 1 Peter 2.17 says, Love the brotherhood. The church, the brothers in the brotherhood are called the brotherhood.

The guys. Okay? This, again, speaks to familial language. Familial language is all over. These are some of the main key verses, but there's many others. 1 Corinthians 4.15, Paul's saying, Hey, you have countless guides in Christ, but you don't have many fathers.

[5 : 31] I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Okay? So Paul was a father to them. All right? Paul then goes on, the same guy who says he's a father to them in 1 Thessalonians, when he's writing to them, chapter 2, verse 11 says, For you know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

So he was a father to the Thessalonians as well. And what does a father do? He exhorts, he encourages, he charges. That's what Paul did as a father. Then he kind of twists it a little bit more here to the same Thessalonians, and he says that we, the apostles that went there to Thessalonica, we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

So Paul is actually, he wasn't gender confused. He just, he had the qualities of a stern father who's exhorting and challenging, but he also, he was tough and tender.

He was a velvet brick, as some would say, right? He was like a nursing mother taking care of his own children. He cared for his spiritual children like a mother would. Okay? And you think of this Paul, this stalwart kind of pillar in the church at the time.

And even Paul, when he's greeting a bunch of people at the end of his book, or his letter to the Romans in Romans 16, 13, he mentions this guy named Rufus. He says, hey, greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and also his mother.

[7 : 05] What's significant about Rufus's mother? Paul says, Rufus's mother has been a mother to me as well. Fascinating. Paul had a spiritual mother somewhere in Rome, right?

This great pillar of a man who wrote most of the New Testament. This guy had a spiritual mother. Isn't that awesome? Very encouraging. Rufus's mother was like a mother to Paul.

Okay? And then you have Paul, of course, in 1 Timothy 1, 2 Timothy 1, Titus 1. He says, to Timothy, my true child in the faith. Timothy, my beloved child. To Titus, my true child.

And then Peter, in 1 Peter 5, 13, refers to Mark as his son. All this familial language. So that's kind of the backdrop of this message.

I hope it's clear the church is a family. There's verses all over the place. Familial language is permeating the New Testament in multiple ways.

[8 : 07] And it's not optional. You can't just say, oh, and you really want to disillusion people in a church? Use the language of family without the experience of family. There's a danger with just hearing something like this and saying, oh, yeah, man.

Let's talk family language. That's cool. That's hip. We're going to be the family church. We're going to be the people who talk family. I'm your brother, man. You're my sister. You're like a spiritual father to me.

You're like a mother. And then it's not really true. And everyone is so like, you know, feels a little nauseous. Right? Because there are a few things more disillusioning.

Because of the sensitivity and the pain that comes with natural family and the brokenness of natural family, there are a few things that add insult to injury more than to talk to people who've experienced the brokenness of sin in families and then say, oh, we're a family.

And then it's all language and no experience. Woof. That's rough. Okay? Don't do that. If we're going to talk family, we've got to be family. If we're going to use the language of family, it's extremely important that we hold true to the reality of family as well.

[9 : 17] And we have to be just as zealous. Don't just be about the language. Be about the experience. Okay? So, I want to look at today. That's the backdrop. That's the foundation. I want to look at 14 different aspects of healthy families.

Okay? 14 different aspects of healthy families. And part of this is going to come not from this direct verse saying this is, you know, what family looks like or be this way. But kind of having John 13, 34 in the background where Jesus says to his disciples, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

And so, the template, the example of how we are to be family to one another is how God himself is family to us. The template for how we love one another is how God himself loves us.

Excuse me. How God himself loves us. Now, disclaimer. You don't muster that up. It's not like, ooh, Jesus did it. Now, I'm going to be like Jesus.

Good luck with that. You want to try something that's impossible? Try to be like Jesus. You can't. Okay? But Jesus lives inside of you. And as you die, he lives through you.

[10 : 36] And the life of Jesus is manifesting through you. The love of Jesus. The life, power, and wisdom of Jesus. And so, any way that Jesus loves can be done through us, but not in our own strength and not by our own power and certainly not in the flesh.

It must be in the spirit, in the power of the spirit. Okay? But he says, just as I have loved you, also are you to love one another. Okay? So, let's jump in. Fourteen aspects of healthy family.

First one. Healthy families are known and loved. Healthy families believe they are loved by the other family members. Okay? I'm going to read one of my favorite Tim Keller quotes.

It's from the book, what's his marriage book called? Meeting. Meeting of Marriage. It's my favorite book on marriage, but this is beyond marriage. This is just in general. Tim Keller says, To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial.

To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It's what we need more than anything.

[11 : 41] It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us. To be loved and to be known and loved.

Families know each other. Okay? You can't fake it with your family. It's like, bro, I live with you. I've known you your whole life. Like, I'm sorry. Your little show here you're putting on, I'm not buying it.

I know who you are. You may have fooled them, but you're not fooling me. That's family, right? We know each other. But healthy family knows one another and still loves each other.

Because the tendency is once you get to know people, you run. It's like, whoa, this person. I mean, they seem all right on the front end, but now that I got to know them, yikes.

Right? It's an old Pedro Line song. It says, when they really get to know you, they'll run. And that's the fear we have. I can't let, I got to put on my religious cosmetics. I got to dial it in and make sure that I'm presenting a different person to everybody than I really am.

[12 : 44] Because if they really get to know me, I'm not sure they're going to stick with me. But that's not family. Family says, I know you and I love you. And the reason we do it is because Jesus, no one knows us better than God himself.

He knows everything we've done, everything we will do. And yet he still loves us. While we were yet sinners, Romans 5 says, he loved us. Okay? And family does the same thing. We love like Jesus loves.

And we love in that unconditional way. And so one of the questions you have to ask yourself is, and it's kind of like what Jesus did with Peter in John chapter 21. He said, Simon, do you love me?

And then Simon said, Lord, you know I love you. We have to have those kind of conversations sometimes. Maybe not out loud, but even in our head. Because what ends up happening is some of us maybe are good at truthing one another.

But there's still a question in the back of people's minds. Do they love me? If there's a question in the back of their mind, do they love me? There's where we're missing the family aspect of it.

[13 : 45] It has a form of family, but denies really the power of family. And that is, we need to do a good job building this sense of trust that people love us. Right?

And you'll trust to the degree that you know that you're loved, Bernie Manning once said. And so what ends up happening, if everybody's kind of looking around, kind of skeptical, like, I don't know if they really love me.

I know they'll tell me the truth. I know they'll do their Christian duty. But there's a question in the back of my mind whether this person loves me. If there's a question in people's minds about you, you're hindering people from experiencing real family.

You can't just give them the truth. You also have to build that kind of backbone of trust in your love for them. Does that make sense? That's key.

And you have to assume that people are always asking the question, do they love me? And you might think, well, you know I love you. Guess what? Not the case. Never assume that people know that you love them.

[14 : 45] You always got to show them. You always got to be fighting for that. And that's one of the, this is one of the most important points right here. Fighting for people to know that you love them in all circumstances, right?

Because in knowing and assuming that the question is lingering in the back, and do you make it easy for them to answer that question, or do you make it harder for them to answer that question? Are they answering, no, I don't think they love me. I mean, they'll tell me the truth, or they'll tell me this or that, but I'm not sure they love me.

Remove that question from the back of people's mind, and we start to have a healthy aspect of family. Does that make sense? You follow me on that one? That's a really important one. I would say that's probably one of the most important. Number two, healthy families have healthy parents.

Pretty straightforward. Makes sense, right? 2 Corinthians 12, 14 to 15 says, here for the third time, I'm ready to come to you. Speak this to Paul. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours, but you.

For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. And then he makes this just amazing statement in verse 15. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

[15 : 53] Okay? A healthy family has healthy parents. All right? Apostles are fathers who establish family. Elders are fathers who build and preserve family. So you want to have elders and apostles.

Okay? That's important for family. But there should be multiple people who are aspiring to be fatherly and motherly. Be good parents. And when there's good, healthy parenting going on in the church, we end up having a good experience of church.

You know how it is. The parents aren't good. Rarely are you going to have the kids be good and the experience of family be good. And I think sometimes what happens is we have three types of fathers.

I'm not going to go into this. So I might preach a whole message on this at some point in time. But we can father or mother with all law and like just heavy handed, just checking right and wrong.

Or we can father with license where anything kind of goes. Or we hit that sweet spot where we're stern and yet committed to that person and not going anywhere no matter what happens.

[16 : 55] Grace. Grace that teaches us to say no to ungodliness. We need parents who can parent in that way. They have the sternness. They have the grace. But it's that healthy balance in between that graciousness that says, I'm going to stick with you.

I'm not going to reject you. I'm going to love you like a true parent does. Because a true parent doesn't reject their kids. It's like you're always their kids. And you just stick with people. Okay? Which brings me to the next one.

Number three, healthy families stand by you and are always with you. Okay? Let's look at this from God's perspective. We love the end of the Great Commission. Matthew 28 20. What does it say?

Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. There's something familial, fatherly about that. Right? It says, hey, true family sticks with you. Paul alludes to this in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 9.

He says, do your best to come to me soon. Speaking to Timothy. He says, for Demas, in love of this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Cretans has gone to Galatia.

[18 : 00] Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. There's a witness that happens in family. It says, I'm going to stick with you. I'm not going to let you do this alone. He says, get Mark and bring him with you, for he's very useful to me for ministry.

Take a kiss I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books and above all the parchments. And he says, Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.

The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. And then he says this. At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.

But then he speaks of how God was. He says, may it not be charged against them, but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. There's an aspect of family that says, I'm sticking with you.

I'm standing by you. Even your lowest of lows, I'm always here. Now, you can choose to reject that. You can choose to run away from that. And I'm not necessarily going to chase you in that.

[19 : 02] But you always know I'm standing here, ready to welcome you. I'm always here for you. You know, at your lowest of lows, you can always come to me. There's a sense of standing by you, standing with you.

Luke was that to Paul. Right? He said, Luke is here with me. He alone is with me. It's not letting people do things alone. I remember when I first moved to Kansas City, the second round in 2008, I was rehabbing a house.

I think I was down here without my family. I was working on it all by myself. I was in the northeast Kansas City. Kind of a dark atmosphere there anyways. The lighting was bad. The walls were all painted dark.

It was kind of depressing. I was tired. I was working on this house all alone. It was cold because I barely had any heat in there. And I'm just alone working. And I remember a guy and his wife stopped in to check up on me.

They came from a date. They were all dressed up nice. I'm in work clothes, cleaning stuff up. And they grabbed a broom and they grabbed tools and they started working. I'm like, no, no, no. You guys don't do that. Like, you guys are in nice clothes.

[20 : 02] And he said, we're not going to let you do this alone. And I tell you what, that meant so much to me that night. I know I was telling him to leave. But I really wanted him to stay. I was like, in my mind, I'm thinking, oh, I'm so glad you came.

I was getting really depressed working here by myself. That's what family does. Family says, I'm not going to let you do it alone. I'm going to stand with you. I love that part of family. Number four, healthy families spend FaceTime together.

And I'm not talking about that app on your phone. Okay. I'm talking about like real FaceTime. Okay. Hebrews 10 says, let's not neglect meeting together.

Okay. Families spend time together. There's multiple face-to-face verses, which I love, which was great. Kind of smack in the face of the whole COVID thing. It said churches aren't supposed to get together.

When the Bible says, no, face-to-face. What about COVID? Well, what about the Bible? Face-to-face. First Thessalonians 2.17. Since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face-to-face.

[21 : 06] Families spend face-to-face time together. Time equals relationship. If you don't get time together, you're not going to have family. One of the ways we hinder family is by not getting time with each other and by not getting quality time or not getting face-to-face time.

Maybe it's digital time. We talk on the phone, which that's helpful. But there's no substitute for face-to-face. First Thessalonians 3.6-10 says, Now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love, and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

That's family. Verse 10. We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face-to-face and supply what is lacking your faith. It's that face-to-face connection.

2 John 12 says, There's no substitute for that face-to-face time.

And the more face-to-face time we get with one another, we cultivate and build family. We build that reassurance that this person loves me and we begin to trust that they love us.

[22 : 23] Number five. Healthy families bear one another's burdens. Okay? We don't let people carry their stuff alone. Their difficulties, their hardships, their work.

Galatians 6.2. Bear one another's burdens. Bear one another's burdens. 1 Corinthians 12.26 says, When one part suffers, we all suffer. And when one part rejoices, we all rejoice.

That's how you know you're getting a family connection. You know, when someone suffers, you feel a similar ache in your heart that they do. If you don't feel that when people are suffering around you, there's a disconnect there.

You probably can't say, oh, we have a familiar relationship. Because you don't care enough to carry their, to know what hurts them and to experience it. And it starts by knowing what hurts them. If you don't even know what hurts them, how are you going to suffer with them?

But being in each other's lives in a way that know what hurts people, what's hard for people, and then you suffer with them. Compassion comes from two roots. Passion means to suffer and come means with.

[23 : 30] True compassion suffers with people. That's what family does. And they rejoice with each other, too. Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn, it says in Romans. That's one of the greatest ways to relate to people.

Such a practical verse. You're wondering, what do I do? Well, when they're mourning, mourn with them. Cry with them. Feel their pain. God, give me compassion like you have compassion.

And when they rejoice, you get excited. You know what's really fun is when people get more excited about what you're excited about than you being excited. You ever have that before? I remember when we first had Adia, and this couple came up to us named the Bigleys.

And we were pretty excited about having a baby, but weirdly enough, because they weren't having the baby, we were having the baby. They seemed more excited about us having the baby than we were, and we were pretty excited.

And they grabbed us, and they picked us up, and they were jumping up and down. I was like, this is hilarious. I'll never forget that, though. It's like, I love that. I felt like, you're more into this than I am.

[24 : 31] And that connects you. You feel connected with that. How are you at that? Are you good at that? Can you rejoice with other people?

Or are you so in your own world and in your own head that you can't rejoice with other people, and you certainly can't get compassionate and suffer with other people? That's a flaw. That's a hindrance to family when we can't do that.

People who are good at that are good at cultivating family. Number six, healthy families make room for one another. Okay? What does that mean? Room in your heart, room in your home, room in your schedule.

2 Corinthians 7, 2-3 says, make room in your hearts for us. Verse 3 says, you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. Okay? Family makes room for one another.

When it's constantly like, I just don't have time. My home never gets opened. Like, I've never been in your home before. I certainly don't feel like I'm in your heart.

[25 : 35] And there's never any room in your schedule. Family makes time for one another. Family opens their heart. They open their home. They open their schedule. And they do it voluntarily. If you have to, if some people think, oh, that's not me, man.

I'm always open. You're open when people ask you, but do you ever volunteer it? Do people always feel like they don't know you and you feel distant? Because you're not volunteering to tell them, hey, I'm having a hard time.

But you say, well, but if you asked me, I'd tell you. Well, what if I don't ask you? Would you tell me even if I didn't so that I can get to know you? A relationship, Dean Sherman said it, one of my favorite quotes, relationship is as deep as it is open and as strong as it is broken.

If we're not voluntarily open, we feel distant from each other. That's where you get that language of family. Like we have church together. We spend time together. We got a lot of face-to-face together.

But I don't feel like I know this person. I remember I had a good friend back in the day when I was 19. He was everybody's friend. Everybody loved him and spoke highly of him.

[26 : 38] But nobody knew him and he had no close friends. And I was like, what is the deal with him? And it's because he was the nicest guy. So everybody liked him. He was really just a fun guy to be around.

But I lived with the guy, actually. And I still didn't feel like I knew him. Because he didn't open up. He never shared what was hard.

I had no idea what was hard for him. I had no idea what hurt him. Because he never opened up about it. Even you'd ask him, he kind of didn't want to talk about it. And so he had tons of friends, but no family.

The church is full of people. I have tons of friends, tons of acquaintances, but no family. And one of the biggest reasons is because we don't open up. It's not just transparency.

It's vulnerability. You don't just open up the windows. You unlock the door and let people in. Okay? Number seven. Healthy families focus on the family. See what I did there?

[27 : 33] You can't have a healthy family, though. You can't just think, oh, family's just going to happen. Right? That's easy.

Yeah, right. You've got to focus on it. You've got to prioritize it. You've got to be realizing that the devil is against it. You think the devil wants us to experience family as a church?

I don't think so. You think the devil is opposing us as family? You better believe it. So what are you doing? You focused on it? Do you pray about it? Do you try to cultivate it, build it?

Are you doing your part to do that? Are you just thinking it's just going to happen? Listen, just because you've had it in the past or you've had it in another church or you've done it with other people doesn't mean it's just going to happen.

You have to put effort in. And you may have forgotten that the reason you have it with the people that you do have it with is because at one point in time you put effort into it with those people. Well, there's new people here that you might have to put some effort in.

[28 : 32] And don't think that because some of the people in the church you have it really strong with that you can just live off of that and neglect the people that you don't have it with. You have to put effort into those relationships where you don't have it.

Or we don't have a healthy church. We don't have a healthy family. Okay? So Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3.5, if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

Essentially saying church is a family. And you learn how to be good at church by being good at family because church is family. Okay?

That's why you're supposed to do good to all people, but especially the household of faith, it says in Galatians 6.10. Especially the household of faith. He's saying prioritize the household of faith.

Focus on the church family. Focus on making it a church family. Okay? Number eight, healthy families are selfless. 1 Corinthians 13.5 says love does not insist on its own way.

[29 : 33] Love does not insist on its own way. I mean, I'm sure it's already happened already, but how many, you know, make a list. How many things have happened in this church already that aren't the things that you wanted to have to be done the way that they're being done?

Welcome to church. Welcome to mixing a bunch of different people together. Right? Things aren't always done the way you want them to. Love says, I'm not going to insist on my own way.

1 Corinthians 10.24 says let no one seek his own good, but the good of his name. You're not self-seeking. I'm saying I'm not going to insist on my own way.

Philippians 2.3. I think Chris is going to hit this next week. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves.

Family says you're more significant. I'll lay down my life for you. I'm not seeking my own way. When do you have strife in family? When do brothers and sisters fight? When do the kids fight in the back seat?

[30 : 35] What's 99% of the time what's happening there? One of them is insisting on their own way. Isn't that true? All right. No, I want the seat. No, I want this. No, I get the snack.

It's like, hey, stop it. Right? And the parent has to say, stop what? Stop insisting on your own way. Stop being self-seeking. When family does that, you have strife with the brothers, strife with the sisters, strife with the brothers and the sisters.

Okay? Healthy families are selfless. Number nine, healthy families make each other feel comfortable. Okay? Now, you can abuse that and have this kind of, yeah, it's just about making people feel comfortable.

There's two ditches in this. There's being standoffish or being overbearing. Okay? One hindrance to having people feel comfortable with you is that you just kind of have that stiff arm.

You're giving them the Heisman every time they come in in close, you know? You have to, you just kind of stand off. It's like, I'm trying to get to know this person. But every time I do, it's like, or I poke or I prod or I try to ask questions.

[31 : 40] It's just like, they're like, it's the stiff arm. Okay? And it's just awkward. It's weird. Like, I don't know how to connect there. And then the other way is that you're a little much.

It's like, you know, hey, first time meeting you. Hey, I'm Josh. Want to have a sleepover? And it's like, whoa, not now. It's a mirror that's not a ding on you. But it would be like, if you did that right away, it'd be like, ah, kind of weird.

There's two ends of the extreme, right? It's like, sometimes people are a little much on the front end. It's like, hey, can we kind of like do normal human relations here?

And just like, my name's Josh. You know, like, what are you into? Like, and have conversation. So we can make people feel uncomfortable through weird means.

Either we're just a little much for people. It's like, hey, can you just tone it down a bit? Or we're a little, we're not enough. You know, it's just like constantly pushing away and stiff arming.

[32 : 44] And then people just don't feel comfortable. They feel weird. And a lot of times what ends up happening is if you feel uncomfortable and weird, the other person feels uncomfortable and weird. If you feel awkward, we feel awkward.

Okay? If I feel awkward, you're going to feel awkward. And so just be normal. Just be normal. And families, you don't do that. Like, families are more normal than anything because it's like, you can't, everybody knows you anyways.

It's not like you're going to put on airs in your family. And in your family, if someone's being too much, just like, bro, chill out. Like, what are you doing? You know? Or if someone's giving you the stiff arm, it's like, I'm your brother.

Why are you doing that? I'm your sister. I'm your parent. Okay? So Matthew 7, 12 says, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

Okay? It's the golden rule. Number 10. Healthy families eat meals together. I know that's not as common of an experience nowadays as it used to be.

[33 : 51] But I'm a firm believer on this. And there's always an element of pushback of this in the church. And Gene and I always are really kind of bullish on this and just say, listen, healthy families eat meals together.

But that's more work. Healthy families eat meals together. But that's going to cost more. Healthy families eat meals together. What's some of your best fellowship? It's around dinner tables. Okay?

Look at the Bible. Look at how much fellowship there was around food. Okay? When you take food out of the meeting, sometimes it's practical. But a lot of times it makes it less familial.

But that's going to cost more. It's going to be more time. Yeah! You're right. You want family? Or you want some superficial hallelujah Christianity? You want happy smiles and half sympathies, as Mike once sang?

Or do you want like real table talk? Do you want to eat? Like there's something about eating a meal together that just makes us feel like family and bonds us together. And I'm a huge believer on that.

[34 : 52] And Jesus, when he would, it's very Hebraic too. Like when Jesus, look at, was it Zacchaeus? Hey, I'm coming to your house today to eat. Well, in Hebraic culture, that was more than just like, hey, I'm going to come over and eat.

That was an extension of fellowship. It meant something. And whether our culture has aborted that, and it doesn't mean as much now in our culture, it still means something to human hearts.

There is an element of fellowship that happens around dinner tables and around meals and around food. And it's just real. And it's not, if you read the scriptures, it's not lost on you.

Okay? This is what they did. Acts chapter 2 says, day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and sincere hearts.

Okay? They were doing this day after day, eating with one another. So what were all the spiritual things they did in the book of Acts? They prayed together. They were meeting together. They were sharing. But what were they doing? What else were they doing?

[35 : 49] They ate together. Often. Daily. These people ate together. Don't, don't like say, oh, that's not spiritual. This other stuff's also, I mean, they prayed and they were preaching the gospel and they were sending people out.

It's, yeah, that's all good stuff. You know what else they did? They ate together. It's biblical. It's very spiritual. Very productive when it comes to family. Number 11.

Healthy families share what they have with each other. Okay? They share not just their stuff, but their very lives. 1 Thessalonians 2, 7 to 8.

Paul, I love this verse. We were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of our own children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but ourselves, our own selves.

Because why? Because you had become so dear to us. Family shares. They share their hearts. They share their very lives. They share their stuff.

[36 : 50] They share their food. They share their things. They share their, there's a lot of the practicals there. But he says they share their own selves.

And he says he was affectionately desirous of them. Have you ever been affectionately desirous? Let's just ask this question. Let's just take this church, Christ's church. Are you affectionately desirous of the other people in this church?

If you're not, I'm not saying that to condemn you. I'm saying Paul was. And that's one of the ways he cultivated. That's why he said to them, I'm like a father to you.

I've exhorted you. That same group of people in that same letter that he wrote to them, he said, I talk to you like a father. Well, a father is affectionately desirous of his kids.

Okay. True, healthy family. He loves to be with each other. My daughter was just in Austin, Texas for the last three, three days, four days. And she was so excited to come home.

[37 : 49] Why? She missed her family. She liked being with her family. That's what families do. Now, there's sometimes you don't like being with your family. I mean, come on. But overall, if it's healthy, you like being with your family.

And that's one of the signs of a healthy family is family likes being with each other. When you've got a family that doesn't want to be with each other, it's like, hey, that's not a healthy family. It's still a family, but it's not a healthy family. And so when we're affectionately desirous of one another, and we share not only the gospel, but our very lives, that's familial.

And Paul modeled that extremely well. You see in Acts chapter 2, 44, there's all who believed were together and had all things in common.

They shared stuff. They shared stuff. This doesn't mean you've got to live in a commune and nobody has their own stuff. It just means you don't live as if those things are only yours, right?

It's like, oh, you want to use this? Go ahead. I got this. Go ahead. Use my thing. Like, oh, you want this? This would be better for you to have it. You're just thinking like that because that's what family does.

[38 : 51] Number 12. Got three more here. Healthy families listen to each other. Okay? James 1, 19. Know this, my beloved brothers. Familial language.

Let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak. One of the ways that people think that you don't love them is when they think that you only want to be heard and you don't want to take the time to listen.

If you're with someone and you feel like they're always just talking and they're not good listeners, it puts that question of that first point back in the back of their mind, doesn't it? You start to ask the question, does this person really care about me?

Or is it all they want to do is just talk about themselves? If that question is coming, it hinders family. And this is why he uses that familiar language. He says, know this, my beloved brothers.

Let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak. Good listening is a quality of healthy family. And some of us are really good at that. Some of us could do a better job of that.

[39 : 55] Right? And it is a skill and it is something that has to be focused on. All right? Here's a little tip I got from someone a long time ago. I read it in a book or something, but I try to think about this.

They said that whoever you're talking to at any given point in time is the most important person in the world. If you can make people feel like that when you're having a conversation with them, I think it's going to go pretty well.

Right? Have you ever felt that way from someone else? That when you're talking to them, they look at you and they listen to you with a sincerity and a genuineness. You feel like you're the most important person to them at that given point in time.

And it makes you, it endears you to them. It makes you feel loved. Makes you feel like this person cares more about me than themselves. But when it's the opposite, you start to ask the question, I don't know if this person cares more about me than themselves.

Okay? Proverbs 18.13 says, If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. Okay? Number 13.

[40 : 57] Healthy families are dependable. They can be counted on. In other words, the language we use, they're like partners. Right? They're people you can count on.

One of the ways, I'm firmly convinced that one of the ways to cultivate healthy family with each other is that if we have shared mission, shared vision, and shared responsibility, it creates this strong bond of unity and sense of family.

Because if you don't have to share the same mission, like if one person's about this and another person's about this, it's like we're going in multiple different directions.

Where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. It's like we'll be trying to get people's heart in the same place when it's really going somewhere else. So if we're not all seeking first the kingdom, we're not going to feel like a family together.

Because we've got people who just don't feel like they're part of the family. They're off somewhere else. But then if you have like this agreement that the kingdom is first, but we don't have shared vision of how that fleshes out, for example, in all of life.

[42 : 02] Yeah, a bunch of people's like, oh yeah, yeah. Kingdom of God, totally with you. But it's like, yeah, that's just more of a Wednesday night thing and a Sunday morning thing. It's not an all of life thing. Well, the people who do believe it's an all of life thing are going to feel very divided from you because you have division, two visions.

Someone thinks it's a part of life thing and someone thinks it's an all of life thing. It aborts family immediately. You don't feel that family connection with those people because they have a different vision than you.

And then lastly, you can have shared mission. You believe the kingdom's first. You have a shared vision of how it gets fleshed out in all of life together. But if you feel alone and that we're not doing that together and sharing the responsibility of that, it doesn't feel like family.

It doesn't. But when you have all three of those things, that's a dynamic, potent, familial connection that is very difficult to break and very difficult to compete with, honestly.

There's such a sense of unity when you know that someone has the same mission as you, same vision of how it gets fleshed out, and there is a shared priority of responsibility. You know, these guys are going to take up as – there's not going to be an argument over who's carrying the weight.

[43 : 16] Like, we're all going to be carrying the weight. It just feels so familial because that's what people do in families. It's like, hey, we got the same – we're trying to do this family thing together. There's no such thing as a non-all of life thing in a family.

Like, you don't do family in part of your life because you're in the same – like, when you're younger, at least, you're all in the same house. And when you're all taking responsibility for the house, the house feels together.

Lastly, number 14, healthy families have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is from 2 Corinthians 13, 14. It speaks of the church being the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of different people in this room, different backgrounds, different ages, different church backgrounds, different socioeconomic backgrounds, different personalities, different beliefs even.

Okay? All those things that I just said are formula for not connecting, not gelling. Like, that's a lot of evidence against what could be family.

And if you look at that, you have grounds to be very discouraged and have no hope for our church being any kind of family, even after all those other 13 points I just said.

[44 : 30] Because there's too much against us. But if the church is a fellowship of the Spirit, bingo. It's all possible.

As long as you have the Spirit and I have the Spirit, I can fellowship with you, even though apart from the Spirit, I would never be friends with you. I would never naturally connect with you.

We're from such totally different ends of the spectrum. We're totally different worlds. But if you have the Spirit and I have the Spirit, there is immediate, deeper connection than you could ever imagine because it's a Spirit connection.

And so one of the main ways that people try to aim at family in the church and fail miserably is that they try to be family with people purely on natural means.

And it's like, well, you're in your 70s and I'm in my 20s. And the guy in the 70s can't even understand the guy in the 20s because he's using all these weird slang stuff and doesn't even know that he's speaking the same language.

[45 : 31] And then it's like, I can't relate to you. You have such a different personality than me. We couldn't be further from, you know, we're so different. But when you have the Spirit and I can connect with, I love what you love, you love what I love.

I value the Scriptures, you value the Scriptures. I love Jesus, you love Jesus. My greatest joy is to give worship to God. Your greatest joy is to give worship to God. I have the same mission as you.

I want to see people get saved. All these things are relating at the Spirit. And so if you have people in this room and in this church, you're thinking, man, it's rough with that person.

I'm trying, but I can't gel. It's not happening. Ask yourself, how are you relating? Are you fellowshiping around other things in the Spirit?

Aim at that fellowship of the Spirit. Talk about what God's teaching you. Talk about what you're learning. Talk about the Scriptures. Talk about Jesus. Talk about the things you're struggling with.

[46 : 31] Share your sins with each other. Give encouragement to one another. Pray for one another. Connect in the Spirit. And you can be close. Now, there might be a learning curve and there might be a little hump to get over.

But I can honestly say some of my best friends over the last 30 years of following Jesus are people where I honestly don't think I would be friends with them apart from Christ.

I really don't. There's just not enough commonality. But the commonality of the fellowship of the Spirit trumps all other fellowship. Do you believe that?

If you don't believe that, you're sunk. You're sunk. Then you're relegated to a common life church. Then you've got to have all your small groups with all the same people who look the same and act the same, same age and talk the same and all this kind of stuff.

And then you can only have fellowship with those people. That is so not the kingdom. That the world can do that. That's not anything supernatural.

[47 : 34] That's not anything distinctly Christian. What is the real deal about Christianity? What makes people look in like Moses looked at the burning bush and be like, what is going on there? When people look in and see, those people should not be getting together.

Those people should not be friends. Those people should not be connecting. Those people, that relationship doesn't make sense. And we say, aha. It's the Spirit.

It's the Spirit. You too can have that connection with people. It's greater than any, even blood itself. It's the fellowship of the Spirit. And that is the basis for family together.

So that's why I wanted to wrap it up with that point. Like Colossians 1.17 says, in him, all things hold together. In him, all things hold together. If you don't believe that, we're not going to hold together as a spiritual family.

We'll just be like a weird, wonky, like, yeah, let's do this because we have to. And it's like, weird. No. In him and holding to him, we hold together. Family is absolutely foundational in the church.

[48 : 38] That's why 1 Corinthians 3.10 says, let us then be careful how we build. Let's be careful that we build family the way it's supposed to be built. And ask the question, hey, are there any of these things, am I an obstacle to the church being family, to Christ's church being family?

And if so, I need to repent and focus on the family, so to speak. Do what I need to do to cultivate family. And then when we have that basis of family, then the gospel becomes just, it's like a well-oiled engine with just got a fresh set of lubrication going there and everything's just firing perfectly.

That's what church's family does in combination with the gospel. It's such a potent combo of you preaching the gospel. That's why this has to be foundational for us. We want to reach people.

We want to reach people to gospel. But if we preach the gospel, but our experience together is not family, we're betraying the gospel. On the opposite, when we preach the gospel and our experience together is family, it just accentuates everything we say and puts a living model and a demonstration to people of what it means to be adopted into a family of God where we relate to another, not on our similar interests, but on Christ himself.

Amen? Amen. Let's stand. Amen.