

Brotherly Fellowship - God's Family - Brotherly Unity, Love, and Kindness | Fellowship Sermon

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[0:01] God wants a strong church, doesn't he? And brotherly fellowship is a subject close to God's heart.! Living as God's family, as brothers and sisters. God shows us how we can know a true brotherly fellowship.

! What is that? We're going to look at that on three points. Brotherly unity, brotherly love and brotherly kindness. How can we live that out? Firstly, it's about brotherly unity. It's the foundation of our fellowship. There's this deep bond of fellowship, brotherly unity. And it says, Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It goes on to say in this psalm that there the Lord commanded a blessing. Fellowship. It's good, isn't it? Isn't it pleasant? It ought to be. And it's a blessing to our Lord and to us. Brotherly fellowship. We want to foster that and enjoy that. When we come and fellowship, we want to enjoy that, don't we? That it's a good and a pleasant thing. It's a blessed thing.

[1:07] How do we build that kind of fellowship? It's not of man's making. God does it by his spirit. And God joins us together from all walks of life, different countries and persuasions and cultures as members together in his precious body.

Christ's body. And we can know a spiritual oneness in Christ. It tells us Ephesians 4, there is one body and one spirit, even as you're caught in one hope of your calling.

There's a spiritual oneness in Christ. And we're not united by hobbies or opinions, but by Christ himself, aren't we? That we're that one body by his spirit.

And we can know that. We can know this unity. We've got a unity there. And we have a unity in doctrine. There's a strength when we get together that we have that spiritual unity of doctrine.

1 Corinthians 1.10, it says, Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

[2:21] Also, we've got a unity in purpose as well. We've got this God-ordained purpose here, a godly, God-ordained purpose. And we're walking together in the same direction.

It tells us Amos 3, verse 3, Can two walk together, except they be agreed. So we've got that one direction, we've got that one purpose. We're walking together.

And Christ prayed for the unity of his church, didn't he, in John 17, 21. And when we are united, the world sees Christ in us. It's a witness.

The early church, it says of them, they were of one heart and of one soul. Also, truly, it's a work of the Spirit. And it's precious. We want to cultivate that and grow that.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That's what we want, isn't it? And this unity, notice it's a spiritual thing. God does it.

[3:20] It says, What a blessed unity that is, isn't it?

That we have that spiritual unity. And you know what? Satan hates the unity of the church. He doesn't want it. He doesn't want us to be in one accord. He wants to do the opposite, doesn't he? He wants to sow discord. He doesn't want unity. He wants disunity. He wants to destroy and damage and divide, to stir up gossip and pride or hurt feelings.

And he loves that. He loves the flesh coming up. But look at what the Scriptures tell us. It's this repeated theme. Over and over again, one accord. It tells us there, this biblical model.

It's even in the Old Testament that in Joshua's day, it says they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua and with Israel with one accord. And then many times in the book of Acts, we see they all continued in one accord, in prayer and supplication.

[4:33] Acts 2, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Acts 2, 46, and they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Acts 4, 24, when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God and with one accord, it says they prayed. Acts 5, they were with one accord. In Solomon's porch, Acts 8, verse 6, the people gave heed, it says, to the things which Philip spake.

They listened to the word in one accord. In Acts 15, it says, being assembled with one accord, they decided to send chosen men. Missionaries got sent out when they were with one accord.

So that's God's court is the one accord, isn't it? And the devil's court is discord. Discord. We see, what does the Lord hate? Six things, seven, he says.

He says, Yea, seven things the Lord doth hate. They are an abomination unto him. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed, innocent blood and heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift to run to mischief, and then a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

[5:51] So that's certainly one kind of accord we don't want. We want the one accord. We don't want the discord, all right? And Satan's got a bucket load of gadgets that he likes to have in his toolbox to use to try to break down, to break the church apart.

Things like, for example, murmuring. Murmuring. Paul says, Do all things without murmurings and disputings. He says, Really, it's a cancer that eats away at the body, isn't it?

We know the Israelites remember them. They're grumbling and complaining in the desert, wandering around in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 10. And what a shameful thing when the murmuring happened and it just was really not of God.

Then we see, really, that murmuring is like small cracks in a great wall, just undermining it.

Murmuring can destroy the church's testimony and strength. Really, it's carnal, isn't it?

This sort of behaviour, it is a carnal thing. It grieves the Holy Spirit when there's a murmuring, causes much harm and damage to the church's witness. So we want to avoid that.

[6:59] Don't do it. Don't do it. Do all things without it. And then another of Satan's gadgets is gossip and strife. You know, the Galatians there, Paul says to them, Don't be cannibals.

He says, But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. I don't know if you like to bite a piece out of a brother or sister. They don't really taste that good. It's not a good idea.

To bite and devour one another is not a good thing. But really harsh words are like that biting and devouring. The Lord warns against it. He says, watch out for it. Take heed. Don't do it. Another of Satan's schemes is pride.

And it tells us in Proverbs 13.10, Only by pride cometh contention. Contention. It's when someone gets a bit prideful and they start to argy-bargy and make a big fuss and stir the pot.

And pride causes contention. And the Bible strongly warns us against contention. There's many scriptures we could talk about contention. And it's connected with pride.

[8:02] We see that the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with. It tells us, Jeremiah 15.10 talks about a man of strife, a man of contention.

He's the one and the same. And then Habakkuk 1 says, There are them that raise up strife and contention. So there's all of these verses that talk about contention. You know, it's that argy-bargy, that fighting, that banging heads together.

It's not a God. It's the carnal way, isn't it? It's the carnal man. It's the flesh. And we want to crucify that. Now, of course, there is good contention. We see on the left there, you see, it says, Leave off contention.

Cast out the scorner. If you want to get rid of contention, cast out the scorner. And then strife and contention. They come peas in a pod. Strife and contention. They're the bad contending.

But there is a good contending. We've got a gospel to contend for. There's only one name. There's only one door. There's only one way. And we want to preach the gospel with much contention because we want to stand up for that.

[9:19] And then Jude, it says, You should earnestly contend for the faith. Fight for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints. So there's a good contention. We want to stand for something and against some things.

But there's a bad contention as well. So there's good striving. We're striving together. Contending for the faith. Contending for the gospel. But there's this damaging contention, which is ungodly. It's unhelpful. It's ungodly. It's of the enemy. If you can't picture a choir, everyone in a choir is like a group, a church, our body of church.

If everyone sings their own tune, it's chaos. But when we follow the same score, we're singing from the same songbook, there's harmony, isn't there? Mind you, some of our voices might not be so good.

But there's different voices, but there's one song. Amen? There's only one song. And so that's what we want. And when we get together as the church, we want one song. And let's watch out for those who have maybe caused an ungodly contention.

[10:23] My emphasis, though, is on the positive, that we want to guard our unity. Here's some things we can do to help our church stay strong and united and having that one heart, that one mind.

And some of the ways we can guard the unity of the church, the blessed unity that God wants. We see there, stay humble. Stay humble. Philippians 2, 3, let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind.

Let each esteem other better than themselves. Lowliness of mind is a good thing. Amen? If we keep, rather than being high-minded, let's have a lowliness of mind. A lowliness of mind.

It stops the pride, prevents the pride that fuels strife. And humility, it helps us be a functioning family, not a dysfunctional one. When we get on with each other, we learn to get on with each other. We keep this bond of peace. And we also speak words of grace. Ephesians 4, 29, it says, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace, build up other people, minister grace, give grace unto the hearers.

[11:32] So catch yourself. Before you complain about someone, instead, pray for them. All right? I love the scriptures that say, let no evil speaking come out of your mouth.

To speak evil. It ought not to be there. Let no corrupt communication, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, building up people.

And preserve unity. Sometimes, when there's division, for the sake of peace, we've got to lovingly correct that and separate ourselves from those who would sow discord.

Titus 3, 10 talks about that. About a heretic causing division. Divisiveness. It's not a God. And it's hard as a pastor to address, but it's called for sometimes.

It's tough, but it's all about protecting the family. Because that's what we are, isn't it? Brothers and sisters. And sometimes we're going to call the behaviour, hey, that's contentious. That's divisive.

[12:34] And it's not got a place in this family. We want to protect the family. And avoid division. When you think about it, a church, you could compare it to like a house.

And a church divided by strife is like a house with termites. Who's ever seen a house with termites? I have. It may look strong on the outside, but eating away on the inside.

All these little, you know, beaver away. Munch, munch, munch. Crunch, crunch, crunch. They look strong on the outside, such a house. But it's all being eaten away from the inside, from within. White answered. And sometimes you have to call in the pest control people to deal with it, don't you? We need some pest control sometimes in the church.

But thank God we've got, hopefully God helping us, that true brotherly love. And that's the cement that binds us together in a good way. And as believers then, let's stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

[13:36] It's that conduct, that conversation that is becoming. It's the right kind of conduct and way of living that becometh the gospel of Christ. And that cement, that true brotherly love is like a cement that holds us together.

We stick together like glue in a good way. We are warned that there is a bad kind of striving, which is about causing strife.

Again, we see there on the left, Paul says, avoid it. Foolish questions, contentions, strivings about the law, about this or that. They're unprofitable.

They're vain. And he says, the servant of the Lord, he says, Timothy, the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.

There's a striving that is not good, but there is a striving that is good. Amen? That we stand fast in one spirit, striving together, striving together. Yeah, we're in this together.

[14:36] We're all in this game, this mission together, this faith of the gospel. We're striving together for that. Paul says, I strive to preach the gospel. And he says, strive together with me.

Pray for me. Let's strive together in prayer. Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. There's a good striving too. And so we see we want to avoid the bad striving, but we want the good striving.

We want to be striving together, together to do that which is healthy. And Hebrews 12, 9 talks about striving against sin. That's a good kind of striving too. And so let's make a church, our church, a place of brotherly love.

Number one, brotherly love. That's what we want, don't we? Brothers, sisters, you're my brother, my sister. That's what we want. That cohesion, brotherly unity. Number one. Number two, let's aim to be that church that's marked by brotherly love.

Brotherly love. Hebrews 13, 1 tells us, let brotherly love continue. It's like the heartbeat of the church, that bond of fellowship, brotherly love. And we know the church of Philadelphia, if some might measure that to be some measure of what the church is of this day.

[15:49] You've got the church of Laodicea, but you've got the counterpart, the contrary church, the church of Philadelphia. If we ought to be, as it were pictured to be, that kind of church, Philadelphia.

It's brotherly love. That's what it means. And so, that is the word, Philadelphia. Brotherly love. It's not an option. It's an obligation. God wants that for us, as his family.

And love is a commandment from God. Our Lord tells us this. A new commandment I give unto you, John 13, 34. That you love one another as I, as I have loved you.

We sometimes gloss over that, don't we? Yeah, sure, love one another as I have loved you. Wow, that's a big call, isn't it? That we would love like Jesus loves.

That we would love with such a love. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have loved one to another. Talking of love, we think of that supreme model.

[16:47] Who is love? And it's Christ, isn't it? We could explore so many more scriptures, for example, of how it tells us, beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

And the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians, of course, the love chapter. Think about it. Love suffereth long. And it is kind. Consider what love looks like.

It looks like Jesus. That's what it is, isn't it? It looks like Jesus. He's our model. The ultimate example. We think of his sacrificial love.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Can we prioritise others above ourselves? We have need of forbearing one another.

That's a real message of its own, isn't it? Well, we should have a Bible study class. Forbearing 101. Forbearing one another in love.

[17:50] We're called to put up with each other sometimes. All right? Please forbear with me. All right? I know sometimes I can be hard work to forbear with. But it's called for, isn't it?

Forbearing one another in love. And then preferring one another too. Romans 12, 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.

In honour of preferring one another. Wow. In other words, I don't have to be number one. Someone else can be. I can be number two. I can be number ten. Preferring one another in love, isn't it?

Putting others' needs and honour above our own. Looking out for the needs of others within the church family. What tangible ways can we care?

Look for ways to serve one another. Serve one another. Galatians 5, 13. By love, serve one another. What are some opportunities we can use to serve others in the body of Christ?

[18:49] Forgive one another. That's a big one. As Christ has forgiven you. Wow, that's something. Not just forgive. Like, oh, I'll let them off.

But actually, forgive them. Don't hold it against them. They know not what they do. Christ on the cross. As Christ has forgiven you, so also do you.

Think of the power of forgiveness. Like Joseph forgiving his brothers. Genesis 50, verse 20. See, they sold him out. They wanted to kill him.

He said, you meant evil, but God meant it for good. That's love, isn't it? Forgiving. Covering wounds with grace. Do we bear patiently with one another? To bear with one another's weaknesses. And this time, we've just got to let it go. Let go. Let all bitterness. Get the whole lot of it. Get all the pus out of it.

[19:45] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking put away from you. Get it out and leave it. Let it go. Bitterness, evil speaking, deep-seated hurts that hinder fellowship.

Don't hold on to it. Let it go. And Hebrews 12 talks about the roots of bitterness. Hey, there's always those things, those occasions. That the devil would use. Rather say, Lord, help me to forgive like you do.

And then build up one another. 1 Thessalonians 5, it says, Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also you do.

Let all things be done unto edifying, it says. Let all things be done decently and in order, it says. Let all things be done with charity, it says. Are we part of the building crew or the wrecking crew?

Now, it's easy to be part of the wrecking crew. All right? I know there's some people that are really good at demolishing things. They get the big mallet out and bang, smash that wall down.

[20:45] Doesn't take a lot of skill. But on the other side, you've got the building crew. Patiently, brick by brick. Mortar, brick by brick. Building, building, building.

Building up. Edifying. It's the same thing. And so, rather be part of the building crew. Encourage at one another. Speak words that build up. Not tear down.

Think about how you can. Follow after the things which make for peace. Follow. It's got the sense of pursue. Hey, run after this. Those things. Those things that make for peace.

Ways you can build up others. And could it be send a text, share a kind word, lift someone's spirit. Maybe they don't deserve it.

But you can. Follow after the things which make for peace. We could think, how can we love others, listen to people, listen to them, disciple others, give spiritual nourishment, lift up those who are falling, build that supportive spiritual environment.

[21:50] Here's a challenge. Pick someone at church who you can bless this week. Maybe someone you don't know well. Show them love in a tangible way. A real way. 1 Corinthians 13, isn't it?

1 John 3, 16. There's this sense where biblical love makes a sacrifice, but worldly love is self-serving. Notice God's kind of love, it's real.

And we see that it's a real kind of love. And it's genuine too. Notice here, it tells Peter, it writes, how we should have unfeigned love of the brethren.

Love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Unfeigned means it's not fake, it's real, it's genuine. It's from the heart and it's fervent. May we be that kind of church.

God helping us. I know there's always room for improvement, especially in this man. May we be as a church with that brotherly unity, with that brotherly love, and lastly, with the brotherly kindness.

[22:50] They go together. There's the third one, brotherly kindness as well. It tells us about this love in action, this brotherly kindness, and it's the expression of our fellowship.

And Peter writes, add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness add charity. This word brotherly kindness, really it's the same word actually translated brotherly love.

But I think there's a different complexion that kind of draws out, as the King James translates it, brotherly kindness as well. It's like there's some kind of special facet to it here, brotherly kindness.

It's like, we can't think about the kindness of God towards us. How super kind he's been towards us. We think of the kindness of God, the kindness and love of God, our saviour towards man.

The kindness of God's own heart. How kind he's been to us, undeserving in the context of grace there. He saved us when we didn't deserve it.

[23:50] And now we're called to show the same grace. It's God's grace that fuels our graciousness towards others. It's a fruit of the spirit, really. We could see it in effect there of the long suffering, the gentleness, the goodness.

We see kindness there, isn't it? It's the active work of God, isn't it? Can I urge you today, choose kindness. If you've got a choice, choose what is kind.

Be kind. I know they've been looking at the Good Samaritan on Thursdays. You can see it with the Good Samaritan. He didn't just feel sorry for the hurt man. He went out of his way.

He took it upon himself to take time to inconvenience himself. He bandaged his wounds. That's kindness, isn't it? It's active. It's tender. It's real.

It's God's kind of love. And we know that charity suffers long and is kind. Let's go the distance with people, amen? Let's take time.

[24:50] Go the distance. Be practical. Put kindness into practice as well. We see 1 John 3 talks about having compassion. Not love. Love merely in word.

But in deed and in truth. And love shows up, doesn't it? With a listening ear. With a helping hand. Kindness. Kindness. I know it's easy to miss that.

To not be kind. To be unkind. But rather let us strive to be kind. And that can mean helping the weak. Sometimes we might think of ourselves as here and others down here.

Well, let's be humble and help the weak. Support the weak. We that are strong, we should be supporting the weak. Not pleasing ourselves. Not to despise the weak. But to look after them.

So when we think maybe there's someone struggling. Well, maybe we can put ourselves out and do something. Let's show patience and understanding. Maybe to those less mature in the faith.

[25:51] We can be a witness to them. They're watching you. Offer those stumbling a hand up. And speak grace. Let grace be your language. Let your speech always be with grace.

Seasoned with salt that you may know how you ought to answer every man. Now, when you speak, sprinkle a little bit of grace on your tongue. Before you say it.

I'm being a bit silly here. But the sense of a bit of grace wouldn't hurt, would it? A little bit of grace wouldn't hurt when you're speaking. All right? How you ought to answer every man. Sometimes we can utter words, unkind words.

We don't even realise that they're unkind. But on the other side, a kind word can make someone's day, can't it? Kindness. Show it. Be intentional. Look for those ways you can sprinkle that little bit of grace on your tongue and speak some words that are kind.

Take some actions, those small acts of kindness that you can do. Be intentional. Make it happen. Hold a door. Share a smile. Offer help. And bear burdens too.

[26:57] Galatians 6.2. Bear ye one another's burdens. Wow. I've got some burdens, you know. But actually, he's got more burdens than me.

She's got more burdens than me. Maybe I could lighten their load a bit rather than worrying about my own burden all the time. All right? Ask someone, how can I pray for you this week?

Find someone who's hurting or overlooked. It hits the road. Make it real. Don't just have this sermon. Oh, that's a good idea.

Oh, actually, maybe I could make an application. Be a doer. An application of this. Find ways to be useful. To be gracious. To be a blessing. Make it real.

Put on, therefore. It tells us there. As the elect of God. Holy and beloved. Bowers of mercies. It's talking about compassion. Kindness. Humbleness of mind. Meekness. Long-suffering.

[27:52] And it's important that we think about our words before we utter them. Our words and our actions. Are they building up? Are we on this side? They're building up. Or are we on the wrecking crew?

Are we wanting to help others grow in grace and knowledge? Those kind words can make a big difference. They can create a strong church family.

As we offer encouragement, share scripture, pray together, can be a source of strength, can't it? And this closeness of the church, it happens through that mutual support. After all, we're family. We're family. I like that someone was telling me lately, hey, we're family. Yeah, that's true. The household of faith, Galatians 6.10. Household, same word as family. Ephesians 2.19. The household or the family of God. That's what God calls us, family. Hey, brother, sister, it's real.

[28:49] It's not just a token phrase. It's real. You're my brother. You're my sister. And God wants us to be that loving family, marked with those three things, brotherly unity, brotherly love, brotherly kindness. Make it practical. Even those small acts of kindness we do. They reflect Christ. And being kind one to another. Tenderhearted. Forgiving one another. Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. What practical kindness can you show? How can you manifest kindness? It's not just kindness as a theory. It's kindness as actually, I'm going to do it. I'm going to be kind. Hospitality without grudging. Supporting the needy. Forgiveness. Releasing others. Compassion. Filling the infirmities of others. Gentleness. Restoring the fallen with meekness. Make edification your emphasis. To build up. Not to tear down. To speak words of grace.

[29:50] When you think about it, love binds everything together in the perfect harmony. And above all these things, Paul's been talking in the context of kindness. He's been talking about humility. About compassion. Forbearing. Forgiving. He says above all of these things. Put this one. Put on charity. So it's saying put on, in other words, intentionally clothe yourself. Intentionally clothe yourself with charity. Love. God's love. Agape. Intentionally clothe yourself with love. Which is the bond of peace. He says above all, this is the crowning grace. This is the one, the supreme quality. To want to wear this. To be clothed with this. And he says it's the bond. There's a glue there. You know, this charity glues us together. Alright? God's love glues us together. We can stick together because there's love.

[30:48] And will you commit to this today, brother, sister? And we'll sprinkle the grace upon the tongue. That what we say edifies. It doesn't divide. It's not grumbling. It's praying. And it's reconciliation. Don't let bitterness fester. Forgive someone. Intentional kindness. Be kind. Especially to the weak. The ones who can't maybe even return it. And that we all will bring glory to our God together. To the glory of his name. That our fellowship will be good and pleasant and a blessing. Amen? That we'll consider one another a provocation. If you want to be provocative. Provoke unto love. Then I think, oh, that was a stupid decision. Okay, look, sorry. I fail myself all the time. But no, honestly, there's that sense where, hey, we've got to put up with each other.

[31:49] I've got to put up with the man in the mirror most of the time as well. And friends, we've got to get on with each other. We've got a work to do. The day is approaching. Amen? So much the more. So much the more. Because the day is approaching. We've got to get on with each other. All right? Let's make it work. Psalm 133 is our mission, isn't it? It's our mission. That will be that church. That fellowship. No, with brotherly unity. Brotherly love. Brotherly kindness. Satan will try to divide us. But we have the tools that we need to stand firm. Humility. It's a good one to start with. Humility to protect unity. Sacrifice to show love. And grace to offer kindness. As per David's song. He sang this. He said, hey, let's sing this song together. It's the one song. Amen? It's the one song. Amen? Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together, together in unity.

[32:52] It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard. Oh, just smothered him from head to toe. Down his beard. Even Aaron's beard. Down to the skirts of his garment. Just dripped the whole of him. As the Jew of Hermon. As the Jew upon the grass.

As the Jew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing. Even life forevermore. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for the gathering together. The getting together of your family. As brethren. Dwelling together. Living together. In unity. In brotherly love. And in that brotherly kindness, Lord.

It's like the freshness of the Jew upon the grass. And it's like the oil running down Aaron's beard. Just smothered him. Lord, we want that kind of overwhelming sense of who you are.

[33:55] And Lord, we pray that each one might be part of your family. We know that we can enter your family. As it tells us that as many as received him. Jesus. To them gave you the power to become the sons of God.

The children of God. Even to them that believe upon his name. We pray that each one might know that today. To put their trust in Christ. The good shepherd. The goodness of the shepherd. To know your grace.

And Lord, then as your saved people. As your family. As sons and daughters of the living God. As brothers and sisters together. Help us to dwell together. In that godly unity.

To know the godly blessing. That godly fellowship. As we see the day approaching. So much the more we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.