

CONNECTED – Uniting People March 4, 2018

Sharing our lives w/ one another & developing Godly relationships w/ in the body of Christ is extremely important, especially for a church that is on the move. What does a church like that look like? Is there a pattern or example for us to follow? Yes, there is:

Acts 2:46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, & shared their meals w/ great joy & generosity 47 all the while praising God & enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

As we grow in Jesus, we have to unite people together. Christianity is developed not in isolation but in community, the body of Christ.

1. We're built like a building.

Ephesians 2:19b You're citizens along w/ all of God's holy people. You're members of God's family. 20 Together, we're His house, built on the foundation of the apostles & the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself. 21 We're carefully joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through Him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by His Spirit.

We're meant to fit together like bricks in a building. It's essential that the parts of a building fit together. You aren't safe otherwise because there's no support. Those who aren't connected to a church family in a meaningful way have no support. Life is tough. We all need the support of people who care about us. Our church can provide that for the aimless multitude in our community.

LEGOs connect to make amazing things. W/ a handful of bricks, over a million combinations are possible. LEGOs illustrate that we were made to be connected. No LEGO can be any more than it is until it's put

together w/ others. The same is true in our relationships. Decide that you'll take the next steps to connect in relationships.

2. We're joined in a body.

Ephesians 5:29 No one hates his own body; but feeds & cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we're members of His body.

Romans 12:4 Just as our bodies have many parts & each part has a special function, 5 so it is w/ Christ's body. We're many parts of one body & we all belong to each other. 6 In His grace, God's given us different gifts for doing certain things well. If God's given you the ability to prophesy, speak out w/ as much faith as God's given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you're a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it's giving, give generously. If God's given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. If you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

What Jesus did when He was here, He wants to do today through the church. We're the body of Christ. We're His hands. We're His feet. All of us have to do our part. Being part of the body of Christ means we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. If we don't play our specific part, the mission of the church is negatively impacted.

1 Corinthians 12:12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is w/ the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some Gentiles, some slaves, & some free. But we've all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, & we all share the same Spirit. 14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, "I'm not a part of the body because I'm not a hand," that doesn't make it any less a part of the body. 16 If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye; how would you hear? If your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

18 But our bodies have many parts, & God's put each part just where He wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." 22 Some parts of the body that seem weakest & least important are actually the most necessary. 23 The parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe w/ the greatest care. We carefully protect those parts that shouldn't be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts don't require this special care. God's put the body together such that extra honor & care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. 26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer w/ it, & if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. 27 All of you together are Christ's body, & each of you is a part of it.

When Jesus left the earth, He expected us to be His hands & feet. We Christians are His body now on earth & each one of us has a role to play to continue the work Jesus began. Just as there are different parts to the body; hands, ears, heart, lungs, liver... each one of us is necessary for the body to operate completely. Each one of you has been uniquely created by God, given unique gifts, abilities, personality, passions, interests, hobbies, so you can use them in Christ's body, the Church! Some hosts, children's, greeters, musicians, facilities, cafe, etc. If you're a Christian but not actively involved in church, the body suffers because you're not playing your role. You're suffering too because you don't have other parts of the body helping you.

3. We're born into a family.

1 Timothy 3:15 ...you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God...

Galatians 6:10 Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Most people think that Christianity is a belief system. There are beliefs in Christianity, but it's so much more. Christianity is a belong system. We were born again into God's family. We've been adopted into God's family. We are family, we should accept one another & love one another.

God gives us family for a reason. God works through other Christians to help us to grow in our faith, and then receive more fruit in our life. We grow when we are connected to God's family. It happens when we are in community or communing with other Christians.

Psalm 133:1 How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! (NKJV – unity)

It's so important for Christians to get together as a family for worship; to practice relationships, study God's Word & serve. We need others for encouragement if we're going to grow to be the people God has created us to be; also to experience all of the benefits (blessings) God has for us. In the church family, we each play a part, but if we decide to be absent & not play our part, the church, God's family doesn't function well.

How can you learn to love if no one else is around? How can you learn humility living alone? How can you learn kindness or gentleness or goodness in isolation? How can you learn patience unless someone puts yours to the test? Developing spiritual fruit requires being around people-ordinary people – family!

In community/family w/ flawed, demanding, disagreeable people, we learn to take hurt rather than give it. Disagreements & opposition provide the opportunity to experience God's grace. As attractive as a solitary life may seem, it's life among us crazy people that'll develop many Godly qualities.

*“Frank, what do you like most about the Church? The people.” “What do you like least about the Church? The people.” Being a Christian doesn’t mean we always get along. Like any **family** we bug each other, argue & disagree; but it’s through that process of being together, & working out our faith together that we grow & experience God’s blessing.*

You can never fully connect to God & fulfill God’s purpose for your life w/out other people. God works through people to help us grow.

God created you to grow in faith. He expects you to grow up to become mature. Being mature means we’re more like Jesus. Growing up means we learn how to love God & people. Being a disciple’s a lifelong process & it can best be done in community, in church. You can’t do it on your own. That’s why we have the church, the people of God.

Philippians 2:1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender & compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly w/ each other, loving one another, & working together w/ one mind & purpose. 3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, think of others as better than yourselves.

How can you learn to love if no one else is around?

How can you learn humility living alone?

How can you learn kindness or gentleness or goodness in isolation?

How can you learn patience unless someone puts yours to the test?

We need each other. In the messiness of relationships, our hearts are revealed, our weaknesses are exposed, and we start coming to the end ourselves. That’s when we reach out to Jesus for help.

John 17:21 I pray that they’ll all be one, just as You & I are one—as You’re in Me, Father, & I’m in You. May they be in Us so the world will believe You sent Me. 22 “I’ve given them the glory You gave Me, so

they may be one as We are one. 23 I'm in them & You're in Me. May they experience such perfect **unity** that the world will know that You sent Me & that You love them as much as You love Me.