

Our Life Together - 2

'An Intimate Household'

1. Introduction

1. In the first message in this series:
 - a. We looked at whether churches today practise the type of fellowship we see in the Church of the NT
 - b. We asked questions as to whether today's churches:
 - 1) Are communities of believers expressing a sense of concern for one another
 - 2) Or, are they simply groups of anonymous worshippers
 - c. We considered:
 - 1) Factors in society which tempt us to be self-centred
 - 2) How an attitude of self-centeredness is foreign to Christ's teachings
2. In this the second of the current series, we'll look at:
 - a. Christ's teachings concerning the nature of the church He said **He** would build
 - b. How His teachings ought to shape the type of fellowship He wants the members of **His** church to experience

2. Different Views Of The Church

As we begin, let's consider two main contrasting views of the church.

a) Modern man's view

1. 'Church' is an institution or organisation - terms which are found in businesses or corporations
2. So, we find terms used like:
 - a. 'Associate Minister'
 - b. 'Superintendent of Education'
 - c. 'Chairman of Deacons'

While the church was divinely instituted by God, and does have some organisation, it seems that many have moulded the local church into a business-like structure ... '**God Inc.**'

b) Jesus' view - very different

1. He viewed church as a family who would do the will of His Father in heaven - Mat 12:46-50

2. Indeed, both Jesus and His apostles often used the example of the family in speaking of the church.
 - a. Jesus would speak of:
 - 1) God as His Father (John 2:16)
 - 2) His followers as family relatives – brothers & sisters (Mat 12:50)
 - 3) And teach His disciples to address God as **our** Father (Mat 6:9)
 - b. The apostles referred to the church:
 - 1) As a brotherhood - 1 Pet 2:17
 - 2) As the house (family) of God - 1 Tim 3:15

3. Family Intimacy Must Fill Church Life

The church Jesus established was to be ‘*An Intimate Household*’, allowing a closeness not usually found in mere organisations or institutions. In fact, every aspect of the life of God’s people should show the closeness of family intimacy. Let’s look at **five key points**:

a) Our relationship with each other

1. We are to be like little children - Mat 18:1-4
2. We mustn’t strive for dominance over each other. Instead, with humility, showing submissiveness, we become dependent upon each another.

b) Our concern for each other

1. We are to be concerned with protecting the members of our family from harm (esp. spiritual harm) - Mat 18:6
2. And be equally concerned with the one who strays, as we are with the one who continues in the fellowship - Mat 18:12-14

c) Our discipline of one another

1. We are to remember that we are family
 - a. Follow a procedure that draws on our relationship as a family - Mat 18:15-17
 - b. Treat the one disciplined as a brother - 2 Thess 3:10-15
2. If the brother in error is not responsive, we are to take advantage of the family relationship which we have enjoyed, by depriving this brother of that relationship.
3. Indeed, the failure of much discipline is due to the lack of proper fellowship to begin with.

d) In forgiving each other

1. Realising the value of this intimate, family relationship:

- a. Forgiveness **is to be automatic** upon **repentance** - Mat 18:21,22
 - b. We are not to keep a tally of our offences, for this would hinder our relationship as family
2. We are to keep in mind:
- a. How our Father has forgiven us
 - b. That our forgiveness by God depends on us forgiving our brothers & sisters in Christ! - Mat 6:14,15

e) In service to one another

Our 'older brother' came to serve (Mat 20:25 -28); so we are to serve one another as we would in our physical family

4. The Church, Our True Home

All these things are emphasising an important spiritual truth. The church is to be such a fellowship of believers that it can be rightly considered as:

- A home away from home
- A home which is our true home

Consider three points:

a) The cost of discipleship can be great

For some, it may even mean forsaking their earthly family - Mat 10:34-39

b) Yet Christ intends for his Church to make up for any cost

1. Whether it be:
 - a. The cost of putting Christ before family
 - b. The cost of leaving family to serve Christ (e.g. YWAM, OM – 'Logos' & 'Doulos II' ships)
2. Christ has promised a hundredfold in replacement - Mark 10:28-30

c) The Church can be a home (family) for all

1. For those away from home (e.g., college students, people working on short contracts)
2. Those who never had a family at all, or an incomplete one (e.g., orphans, or those with single parents)
3. People from a dysfunctional family (e.g. those abused, neglected etc.)

5. How To Build Family Intimacy In The Church

OK, so what is our response to this week's message?

For the church to be the home Christ intended, the family members must do their part. And that might mean making changes.

a) **We may need to spend more time with each other**

This point can be contrary to current fashion in the modern church, so consider God's Word carefully.

1. For some, spending more time with each other may mean being more faithful about taking part in the life of the ministry of the church (i.e. our **'mealtimes'**) – Sunday worship services, Home Groups, Youth Groups etc.

Heb 10:23-25 “*23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to **stir up** love and good works, 25 **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

2. For others, it may mean widening our circle of fellowship to include others
3. For all of us, it means:
 - a. Being less self-centred!
 - b. Being more willing to become involved with the concerns of others!

b) **We all need to become more involved in the work (ministry) of the church family**

1. Our task is not just to create some sort of social club
2. It is to encourage a family of believers who are active in doing the will of their Father in heaven, including:
 - a. Saving souls
 - b. Restoring those in error
 - c. Encouraging, building up the saved

Indeed, reconciling everyone with the Father and His family!

3. So we need to provide the appropriate service, which in turn builds intimacy:
 - a. Preaching and teaching
 - b. Encouraging and restoring
 - c. Ministering to the needs of the family, both spiritual and physical

6. **Conclusion**

1. What are we doing to see that the church is fulfilling its design to be *'An Intimate Household'*?
2. If we are doing nothing, or if we are depriving others from trying to become close to us:

- a. We are depriving ourselves of one of the greatest blessings found in Christ!
- b. We are also giving the impression that we may be false disciples of Christ! - John 13:35

Finally, let's all work harder at being the kind of family God would have us to be. If becoming a child of God is your need today, consider what Paul wrote about how we become sons of God - Gal 3:26,27.

Scriptures For 'Our Life Together - 2'

- i. **Mat 12:46-50** *While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*
- ii. **John 2:16** *To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"*

Mat 6:9 *This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"*

1 Pet 2:17 *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

1 Tim 3:15 *if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

- iii. **Mat 18:1-4** *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever **humbles himself** like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*
- iv. **Mat 18:6** *"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."*

Mat 18:12-14 *"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."*

- v. **Mat 18:15-17** *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;*

and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

2 Thess 3:10-15 ... *when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 **Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.***

- vi. **Mat 18:21,22** *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

Mat 6:14,15 *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

- vii. **Mat 20:25-28** *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- viii. **Mat 10:34-39** *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn " a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- 36 a man' s enemies will be the members of his own household.' 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*

- ix. **Mark 10:28-30** *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.*

- x. **John 13:35** *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

- xi. **Gal 3:26-27** *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*