

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

The power of community

Opening Scripture: I Timothy 3:15 *"But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

Points To Ponder:

1. Paul refers to 'church' as God's house.
2. Church is more than just some organization.
3. Church is a family.
4. We are encouraged to know how to conduct ourselves - 'behave' - in the family.
5. Because the church is a family it requires us understand how a church operates like a family. Family is the core value of true community.

How Do We Live As Family In Community?

1. **We cannot bite and devour each other - we support each other.** (Galatians 5:15)

"But if you bite and devour each other, beware lest you be consumed by each other."

*To bite and devour each other is the foundation of Satan's kingdom.

Read Genesis 3:14-15. Make note that the Satan would 'eat the dust'. Humans are made from dust. So when we, as Christians, bite and devour each other it's saying that we are treating each other like Satan treats us rather than how Jesus treats us.

What are some ways we may be treating others like Satan rather than Jesus?

2. **We must realize we are all uniquely imperfect.** (Psalm 68:6)

*"God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;
But the rebellious dwell in a dry land."*

*God 'SETS': The word 'sets' means to *abide, dwell, remain, and stay*. God sets sets us in the family. It's not just a 'membership' mentality (like a club) you can join or leave as you wish. God puts us in a family *'to dwell'*. It's much more akin to be a **mentality of permanence**.

What benefit is there to having a 'mentality of permanence' when it comes to how we think about church?

*The 'SOLITARY': The 'solitary' means *unique, only, or only one*. This phrase intimates that God puts people into His family but that each person is **uniquely / only one**. This is a powerful thought. We are a family that is full of uniquely imperfect people.

*Uniquely Imperfect poses a problem in community. It can create a mess or a masterpiece. It's easy to get along with those who are uniquely like me. It's another issue entirely to learn how to be family with those uniquely different than me. It's these unique differences that cause us to 'bite and devour' each other.

How well do you handle people who are uniquely different than you?

How is it a risk to be in relationship with people who are different than you?

HOW TO BE A UNIQUELY IMPERFECT FAMILY

Better yet: *How can we be God's family and NOT devour each other?*

Read Proverbs 6:16-19 *"These six things the LORD hates, Yes seven are an abomination to Him....."*

1. We get rid of HAUGHTY EYES

Haughty eyes are eyes that look at others differently than you look at yourself. It's sizing others up by their weakness. It's judging others by what you see before you even know their story. Haughty eyes are eyes that see others in such a way it decreases their value by your perceptions. In other words, your perceptions dictate another's value. It's a willingness to fix the weaknesses and negatives in yourself - but not a willingness to help fix the weaknesses and negatives in another. GOD HATES THIS.

How do perceptions dictate value? How do you show value to people? How do you value people you don't like?

2. We get rid of a LYING TONGUE

A lying tongue is speaking wrongfully about another person. It's speaking as if something is true when you do not have all the facts or details. It's speaking deceptively. It's speaking opinions and letting others make judgments without knowing or giving all the facts. GOD HATES THIS.

Have you ever made a judgment about someone without having all the facts? Talk about it. Why? Did your perceptions change after you got to know them?

3. We don't make judgments outside of FORGIVENESS.

Hands that shed innocent blood - It's so easy to sit as a judge and jury over other people's lives and choices. Typically, with others we are the judge and jury. With ourselves we are usually our own Lawyers pleading our own case. It's not our job in the family to make determinations of innocence and guilt. Hands that shed innocent blood means that you judge

other's as guilty without considering forgiveness. Shedding innocent blood means you condemn other's because you were not willing to factor in forgiveness.

Have you ever sat as a lawyer for yourself but sat as judge for another? Why is it easier to represent our own faults and failures but judge other's faults and failures?

Why is forgiveness a necessary way to treat people in the family? What does forgiveness say about all of us?

4. We cannot live in SECRECY.

A heart that devises wicked plans - The heart is the home of the secret place. It's like saying "Outwardly, I fake the love - while inwardly I know I can't stand the person." Christians are professional at this mode of 'Christianese'. How often do we put on the fake smile while inwardly we do not like the person? You cannot fake love to the face and then trash talk someone at the dinner table. GOD HATES THIS.

Why are Christians so good at faking the love, while secretly despising the person?

5. We cannot stir up STRIFE.

Sowing discord has the same spirit behind it as 'murder'. You may as 'HOW SO'? It's breaking apart the family God has joined together. And we should never separate what God has joined together. It carries with it the thought of someone who is sowing seeds to split up a marriage. It's sowing negative thoughts to others in the family to gain a following of opinion. Gossip, negativity, and frustration are all ways strife gets a foothold. GOD HATES THIS. Read Acts 9:4. Why would Jesus say that Paul was persecuting Him. Paul was persecuting Christians. But Jesus says, "You are persecuting Me." Could it be that when we speak negatively against another Christian or treat them negatively that we are really touching Christ?

How could negative talk and actions about others be a direct attack on Christ Himself?

How can we say that sowing strife is akin to a spirit of murder?

WE ARE ALL IN THE TOGETHER

- 1. We must support each other**
- 2. We must allow each other to be uniquely imperfect**
- 3. We must value each other**
- 4. We must vocal about how we appreciate each other**
- 5. We must make effort to learn each other's stories**
- 6. We must live with forgiveness as our foundation**
- 7. We must risk relationship to grow together**