



“Grace for a Purpose Driven Life” – Week 9

Introduction:

1. We are close to the ½ way point of our series: **“Grace for a Purpose Driven Life”**
2. Short testimony time:
 - > What has God been teaching you? How have you applied the material so far? What has our study helped you to DO differently or do better?
3. So far, we’ve laid two main purposes on the table:
 - Purpose #1: You Were Planned for God’s Pleasure**
 - Purpose #2: You Were Formed for God’s Family**
4. That is one of the exciting things about Christianity . . . and a great blessing . . . at the point of salvation, you become part of God’s family forever!
5. Since we are made in the image/likeness of God, we are created relational beings, therefore . . .

I. God Provided You a Place to Belong

- Ephesians 2:19 **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household.**
- 1 Timothy 3:15 **But in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.**

- Remember our recent church theme: It’s Great to Be Part of the Family of God

“We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves.” – p. 130

- Romans 12:4 **For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**

- Following Christ included *believing* who Jesus is, what’s He’s done for us – trusting Him

> but following Christ also include *BELONGING* – being part of God’s family – being a vital organ of a living body and using the gifts you’ve been given to minister to that body!

- The church is a BODY – not a building – it’s an organism, not simply an organization!

“You were created for a specific role, but you will miss this second purpose of your life if you’re not attached to a living, local church. You discover your role in life through your relationships with others.” – p. 131

- The more connected you are to your church in understanding your role and practicing your role, the better position you are in to fulfill God's purpose for your life

Input: What reasons (i.e. really excuses) would a person give for not being connected to a church as we are describing?

"This is why the first symptom of spiritual decline is usually inconsistent attendance at worship services and gatherings of believers. Whenever we become careless about fellowship, everything else begins to slide, too." – p. 132

A. Your Local Fellowship

- When we talk about the church – there are two aspects of that term that we need to keep in mind:

1) **Universal church** – what do we mean by that? [all believers everywhere, dead or alive since the church was established]

2) **Local church** – what do we mean by that? [specific body of believers in a geographical location – e.g. the church at Ephesus, Sardis, Thessalonica, etc. – or Faith Baptist Church]

- Of all the uses of the term 'church' in the NT, almost every time the word refers to a local church, visible congregation
- Many have developed the thinking that they can get along fine without being connected to a local church
 - > there is no submission to the body of the church in church discipline issues
 - > there is no submission to the authority of a pastor in their life

Point: They are spiritual loners who try to get along without being a part of the body life of a church.

- That person will not grow at all, or they will not grow at the rate God intends – they can't fulfill the purpose for which God created them!

- We need to be thinking about . . . :

B. Why You Need a Church Family

Input: How would you answer that question?

1. A church family identifies you as a genuine believer

- My local church is my discipleship group
- Think about the diversity of people that come to our church (various backgrounds) – yet there is a mutual love for each other
 - >It's level ground at the foot of the cross!
- That is a testimony to the world around us of a genuine change in our hearts – i.e. the love for each other
 - John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- Of course the opposite of that is true as well – if you don't love your fellow believer

2. A church family moves you out of self-centered isolation.

- 1 Corinthians 12:26 **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

- Why? – we're all part of the family!

“Only in regular contact with ordinary, imperfect believers can we learn real fellowship and experience the New Testament truth of being connected and dependent on each other.”
– p. 133

- Paul and John had some very powerful words to say on this subject – four of these passages are written directly to local churches:

- Ephesians 4:16 **from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**
- Romans 12:4 **For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**
- Colossians 2:19 **and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.**
- 1 Corinthians 12:25 **so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.**
- 1 John 3:16 **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

3. A church family helps you develop spiritual maturity.

- A person will never develop spiritual maturity by just showing up at the services (or just coming to an ABF)

- The issue is what are you doing with the teaching you are receiving

> In what way are you serving and fulfilling the “one anothers” in the NT

Input: What are some examples of the one another passages in the NT?

[Love, pray for, encourage, admonish, accept, honor, bear each other burdens, forgive, submit, be devoted to, etc.]

“These are your family responsibilities that God expects you to fulfill through a local fellowship.” – p. 134

Q: With WHOM are you doing this?

- Each of us need to make sure we're moving on from the 'milk' to 'meat' spoken of in Hebrews 5:

- Hebrews 5:13 **For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.**

4. The body of Christ needs you.

- Our church family needs each other – we are better when each person is using their gifts/abilities to the glory of God and the edifying of the church!

- 1 Corinthians 12:7 **But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**

IMPORTANT Q: How are you using your gifts/abilities to minister to the Body of Christ?

- It's easy to devote your time to a lot of things, but are you giving your time to the most important thing?

Point: Jesus promised to build His CHURCH – are you doing all you can to be a part of that building process?

- You can get involved in all the community ministries you want, but if you're not using your gifts/abilities to minister to the Body of Christ, that's not in keeping with God's plan

5. You will share in Christ's mission in the world.

Input: What is Christ's mission in the world? What is He wanting us to accomplish?

- Matthew 28:19-20

- Acts 1:8 **but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."**

6. A church family will help keep you from spiritual decline!

- 1 Timothy 1:19 **keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.**

- Some of this comes from following the leadership of your pastors and trusting them

- We're not talking about blind loyalty [we all have to be Bereans], but I am talking about learning to listen to your pastor and being willing to follow him

- Hebrews 13:17 **Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.**

C. You Have to Make a Choice!

- Are you going to be committed to the process – to the body – for the glory of God?

- Acts 2:42 **They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**
- 2 Corinthians 8:5 **and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.**

Input: What is the difference between being a church *attender* and a church member?

[one word: commitment --- contrast the following on the white board]

Attenders	Members
Consumers	Contributors
Want the benefits but no responsibility	Willingly takes responsibilities
Spectators	Participants
Thinking: What can I GET?	Thinking: What can I GIVE?

Q: Is it possible for a member to act like an attender?

II. Experiencing Life Together

- That is one of the benefits of being a part of the body – you're NOT ALONE!
- Other people can encourage you, pray for you, rebuke you or admonish you
- You can LEARN from each others failures and/or achievements – a true GODLY RELATIONSHIP can be established and developed!
- The key word in the NT for what I'm talking about is FELLOWSHIP!
 - *Fellowship (koinwni,a)* = a close mutual relationship; participation, sharing in; partnership; contribution, gift

Input: What is the difference between real and fake fellowship?

A. In real fellowship people experience authenticity.

1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

B. In real fellowship people experience unity.

- 1 Corinthians 12:25 **so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.**
- Romans 1:12 **that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.**
- Romans 12:10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;**
- Romans 14:19 **So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.**

C. In real fellowship people experience sympathy.

- Sympathy is entering in and sharing the pain of others – weeping with those who weep!
- Colossians 3:12 **So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;**
- Galatians 6:2 **Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.**

D. In real fellowship people experience mercy and grace.

- **Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.**

Mercy = withholding what a person does deserve [compared to *grace* = giving to a person what they do not deserve]

- We need to give BOTH!

Input – What one step can I take today to connect with another believer at a more genuine, heart-to-heart level?

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Introduction:

Personal applications:

* We’ve studied two main purposes:

Purpose #1:

Purpose #2:

I. God Provided You a Place to Belong.

“We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves.” – p. 130

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“This is why the first symptom of spiritual decline is usually inconsistent attendance at worship services and gatherings of believers. Whenever we become careless about fellowship, everything else begins to slide, too.” – p. 132

A. Your _____ Fellowship

* Two aspects of the church:

1) _____ church

2) _____ church

B. Why You Need a Church Family

1. A church family _____ you as a genuine believer.

2. A church family moves you out of _____.

“Only in regular contact with ordinary, imperfect believers can we learn real fellowship and experience the New Testament truth of being connected and dependent on each other.” – p. 133

3. A church family helps you develop _____.

Input: What are some examples of the one another passages in the NT?

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4. The body of Christ _____ you.

5. You will _____ in Christ's _____ in the world.

Input: What is Christ's mission in the world? What is He wanting us to accomplish?

6. A church family will help keep you from _____ !

C. You Have to Make a Choice!

Input: What is the difference between being a church *attender* and a church member?

Attenders	Members

II. Experiencing Life Together

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C. In real fellowship people experience _____.

D. In real fellowship people experience _____ and _____.

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Personal applications:

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- **Purpose #2: You Were Formed for God’s Family**

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- **Ephesians 2:19 . . . fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household.**
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- **Romans 12:4-5**

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*** Two aspects of the church:**

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2) Local church

B. Why You Need a Church Family

1. A church family identifies you as a genuine believer

• John 13:35

2. A church family moves you out of self-centered isolation.

• 1 Corinthians 12:26

“Only in regular contact with ordinary, imperfect believers can we learn real fellowship and experience the New Testament truth of being connected and dependent on each other.” – p. 133

- Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:4; Colossians 2:19; 1 Corinthians 12:25; 1 John 3:16

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