

Just for fun... Family vacations are wonderful times, but they do have their tedious moments. Dad, Mom, and the two boys were about 200 miles into their trip, when Dad had enough! "Ever since we left home," he said, "you boys have been picking on each other, yelling names and tearing up the back seat of the car. I am putting an end to this now!" He slammed on the brakes, pulled the car off to the side of the road, jerked his sons out and spanked them both soundly. "I don't want to hear one word out of either of you for 30 minutes," he shouted, "not one word!" The two boys sat still and quiet for at least 30 minutes until the youngest one meekly said, "Daddy, do you remember when you spanked me? Well, one of my shoes came off...!"

☞ **Be the Church.** What exactly is the Church?

The church is the “called-out ones” who assemble together at least every week.

☞ **You are the temple of God**; He wants to fill you with his spirit.

We are citizens of heaven; We belong to God and set our minds on heavenly things.

We are God's house; He is joining us together as we grow in our faith. We always welcome him home!

☞ **“brothers”** is used around **180** times in the NT to refer to believers. The word **“father”** is used over **1600** times in the bible; more than prayer, praise and worship all combined! In the Gospels and Acts, Jesus preferred to call God “Father,” using the name 171 times. He taught us to pray, “Our Father...” All of Paul’s letters refer to God as “Father” in the greeting.

☞ The church is... we are... **the Family of God**

“Family.” What rushes through your mind? Often we think of examples of families on TV, whether good or bad, like the Waltons, the Brady Bunch, the Tanners of Full House, the Baroness of Everybody Loves Raymond and the thoughts go on. So what really is a family?

The Family is designed by God. It was designed to be a place of safety from the world. It's an environment where the art of nurturing takes place. It's a place where children are born and raised. It's where love takes place on a daily basis. It's where encouragement is dished out in large doses and, where discipline is found and respect is taught. (This could equally describe what the Church is supposed to be like.)

☞ **Ephesians 3:14-19** Cf. **Ephesians 5:33**

☞ **Fundamentals for Families: Love and Respect**

☞→**Rooted in love.** Love is a fundamental aspect of family. This is the self-sacrificing kind of love. As God's family we are to be loving and kind, like a good family should be.

Here in chapter 3 it talks about how extensive God's love for us is. He lowered himself to become a human and he died on a cross for us. That gives a basic idea of his love for us. It's beyond our comprehension. Yet, he is our example and we should be loving each other deeply and self-sacrificially as well.

☞→**Built with respect.** Show love and respect because it's right and God is pleased by it. (Same thing with church family... love and respect!)

☞ Another word for respect is "**honor.**" **Romans 12:10** states that as Christ followers we are to take delight in honoring each other. Did you catch that? We are to "delight" in honoring another person. It is not supposed to be a hassle or something to dread. When we delight in honoring another person it boosts their feeling of value. Last week we gave away candy bars in appreciation of all of our volunteers. That was fun for me to call out various ministries and see so many be acknowledged for their service.

Love and respect are shown in kind words and actions. It's shown in being helpful, encouraging, and expressing gratitude. True/False: On Respect...

- I treat other people the way I want to be treated.
- I am considerate of other people.
- I treat people with civility, courtesy, and dignity.
- I accept personal differences.
- I work to solve problems without violence.
- I never intentionally ridicule, embarrass, or hurt people.

The people who have the most difficulty respecting others are those people with an inflated idea of their own importance. Philippians 2:3 tells us to be humble, thinking of ☞ others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but **be interested in others**, too, and what they are doing. (NLT)

Please understand that respect is something you choose to give to your spouse and family, including your church family, whether you think it has been earned or not.

More Fundamentals for both home family and church family:

☞ **Ephesians 4:2-3**

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

☞→We've talked before about needing to **"put up with" each other**. A little **humility** and **gentleness** goes a long ways. Unity requires hard work...

☞What we need is to **"make every effort" to keep the unity**. Family ties require hard work. Church unity requires hard work. We need to have patience with each other; parents with kids and kids with parents, as well as siblings with siblings. Church leaders with church members and members with leaders, as well as members with members. Unity requires hard work...

Some may think, "That's easy for you to say. Your family didn't have any issues." Wrong. I fought with my sisters just like you did. I didn't always think Dad and Mom treated me fairly. I wasn't always the perfect child that you might imagine. But we hung in there. We learned to put up with each other and keep the unity even in spite of our differences from time to time. And that's still true today. When we get together it's a lot of fun, but there are some instances of rubbing each wrong, too. But we work through it.

Ephesians 5:21

☞→**submit to one another** out of reverence for Christ.

On different occasions and for varying reasons, each one in the family will need to let the other family members take precedence. It's the same in church.

For Naomi and me, even though our two families are very similar, we have found that there are still differences. So, we decided a long time ago that "when in Rome, do as the Romans do..." The Mathews sometimes have a 3 hour Christmas gift exchange marathon... The Waldo family is early to rise for breakfast even on holidays...

In fact, it's a sign of maturity to allow others to have precedence. When you demand everything to be your way and in your time, that's childish. That's what toddlers with temper-tantrums do!

1 Peter 3:7

☞→You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an **understanding** way... (NASB)

Husbands, we are directly instructed to understand our wives. Now I know some husbands would say that it would be easier to understand quantum physics than to understand their wives. But that's what we're instructed to do. This principle of understanding one another can be applied to relationships in the church as well.

☞**James 1:19** helps us here... "be **quick to listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (NLT)

Part of this understanding and listening is to be careful **not to jump to conclusions**. When something gets under your skin, if you can't simply be okay with it, then you need to have a face to face conversation with the intent of listening and understanding the other person.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

☞ → **encourage one another** and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Perhaps the easiest way to grow a healthy relationship is to offer encouragement.

How can we encourage one another in our homes and in the church? Two simple ideas:

☞ **By smiling**

Job, a man acquainted with grief and sorrow, in chapter 29, was recalling the days before he was visited with calamity. He said that when people around him were discouraged, *I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them v. 24.* (NLT) Never underestimate the power of a smile. A smile not only increases your face value, but it warms the heart of those you give it to. I know it helps me when I'm preaching!

☞ **By pointing out the positive**

Someone noted, "Man doesn't live by bread alone. He also needs buttering up." Words are powerful in that they can do enormous harm or amazing good.

A reporter once asked Andrew Carnegie, the great entrepreneur why he hired 43 millionaires to work for him. Carnegie pointed out that those men were not millionaires when he hired them. The reporter then asked, "How did you develop these men to become so valuable to you that you paid them so much money?" Carnegie replied that people are developed the same way gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold; but you don't go into the mine looking for dirt – you go in looking for gold!

Start today to look for gold in your child, in your spouse, in your parents and in your church family. Jesus certainly must have seen the gold in the disciples he chose.

☞ Gary Chapman's, **The Five Love Languages: Time, Words, Gifts, Touch, Service**

☞ → One more fundamental: **Ask for and offer forgiveness**

Anyone who lives in a family of any kind knows that people will disappoint and hurt you. One gem of wisdom from people who have been married for many decades is this: "you overlook at lot of little things and you forgive each other." It's the same in the church...

☞ **Colossians 3:13**

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.
Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (NLT)

Forgiveness is not natural. It seems to be more natural to carry a grudge; to record all wrongs in red on a legal pad in our minds; to think of ways of getting back at those who hurt us. Yet the Bible is clear in its instruction. As we have experienced forgiveness from God we are to forgive others.

The Spanish have a story about a father and son who became estranged. The son left home, and the father later set out to find him. He searched for months with no success. Finally, in desperation, the father turned to the newspaper for help. His ad simply read, "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." On Saturday, eight hundred young men named Paco showed up looking for forgiveness and love from their estranged fathers.

Families today are filled with people who desperately long for reconciliation. Some of you need to experience that kind of forgiveness from God. You can. God has sent out a letter of forgiveness – his name is Jesus. If you will receive him, forgiveness will be yours. For some it's about people that need to be forgiven. Or perhaps you need to ask for forgiveness for something you said or did, and then change your behavior so it doesn't continue happening.

Church, we are the family of God. He is our father who loves us more than we can imagine. We follow his example and show love and respect to each other. We put up with each other; we submit to each other; we work to understand each other; we encourage each other and we forgive each other.

☞→A few more suggestions from Pastor Phil...

Eat together; Play together; Pray together; Worship together; Make memories together

Church, we are family. Like it or not, we'll be in close proximity for all of eternity. We may as well learn to get along now. Think of the ideal family... God's family is the ultimate family. We are each part of it. We belong. Remember who you are! You are part of the family of God!

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God- I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I'm part of the family, the family of God.

Before you go, put a smile on your face; offer some encouraging words to a few people; ask for forgiveness if needed; listen; be the family of God.