

“Behaving like God’s family should.” (15)

Over the past few weeks Peter has been reminding us of our responsibilities as Christians towards the people around us. In **1 Peter 2:11-12** he reminded us that people are watching and we need to be setting an example for the world to see, so that the world knows we belong to Jesus. In **1 Peter 2:13-17** he reminded us that God is the One who raises up and removes those in authority so we need to submit to our governmental authorities. In **1 Peter 2:18-25** he reminded us that when the going gets tough, the tough get going and even though we may suffer for doing good it’s actually pleasing to God when we suffer patiently.

In **1 Peter 3:1-7** he reminded us that we can have the ideal relationship within our marriages provided the wives submit to their husbands and husbands get to know and understand their wives and love them as Christ loves the church. And today Peter is going to remind us of another relationship which needs to be right for the church to function properly and that’s our relationship with each other.

Let me share with you a story I heard about a woman who had been a member of the Lord’s church for twenty-five years. After the service, as she walked toward the preacher who stood waiting at the auditorium door, it was obvious that she had something on her mind. She complained, "Preacher, if God were alive today, He would be shocked at the changes in this church!"

Now that’s amazing isn’t it? ‘If’ God were alive today! Well loved ones God is very much alive today and if He ever gets shocked, I think it would be more in terms of the way His children behave towards each other. And so Peter says let me remind you how your relationship with each other is supposed to be.

1 Peter 3:8+9 “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

Peter says **first** and foremost, for the church to function properly I want you all to be **like-minded**. Now please don’t misunderstand what he’s saying here, he’s not saying that everyone should **think** alike. Whenever you get a bunch of people together you will never get everyone to **think** alike. But what he is saying is that we all need to be united in the same purpose, we all need to be united in the same goals.

It’s the same kind of unity that Jesus prayed about in **John 17:20+21** “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

You see I keep hearing that the ‘**church of Christ**’ is supposed to be an effort to get back to the New Testament way of thinking and practices. Well one of the things which the early church possessed was this ‘**like-mindedness**’. **Acts 4:32** “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.”

And so if we’re striving to be like the early church, then like-mindedness needs to be our goal. And the only way to get that oneness of mind as some translations have it is to totally **submit to the will of God**. In other words, we need to make God’s will, our will; we need to make God’s purpose, our purpose. We need to have the mindset of Jesus Himself when He was here on earth. He said in **John 5:30** “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

The **second** thing we need to have if we want the church to function properly is "**compassion for one another.**" **1 Peter 3:8+9** “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

How do you feel when you see your brother or sister struggling with trials or going through some illness? Does it hurt to see them struggling? Does it move you to have compassion for them? You see again, this is exactly what Jesus did whilst He was here on earth. **Matthew 9:35+36** “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

So Jesus showed compassion whilst He was here on earth but that compassion continues today loved ones even whilst He is in heaven. **Hebrews 4:15** "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

A little girl dressed in dungarees walked into a pet shop and asked whether they had a puppy with a lame leg. She had a pound with which she wanted to buy it. The salesperson of the pet shop was surprised that the little girl wanted to buy a lame puppy. She asked, "Why, don't you want to buy a puppy that can run around and play?" "No, I want a lame one." Finally, she pulled up one leg of her dungarees and showed her brace, saying, "I don't walk so good either."

You see loved ones, the little girl with a lame leg identified herself with a lame puppy and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ identifies Himself with our frailties. **Hebrews 4:15** is saying that the Lord Jesus became a man, taking upon Himself a human body with its frailties in order to identify Himself with us in our bodily weaknesses.

Some years ago a man living in **Wales** had the misfortune of being involved in a mining accident which necessitated the amputation of his right leg. After a period in the hospital, he went to a prosthesis maker to be supplied with an artificial leg. When the appendage had been strapped to the stump, which was all that remained of the injured leg, the attendant requested that the patient get up and walk across the floor. Awkwardly, the man struggled to his feet and staggered across the room. Then, dragging himself painfully back to his chair, he slumped into it, utterly exhausted and discouraged. "That's not how to do it," said the attendant. "Watch this!" Then he walked gracefully across the floor. "Ah," exclaimed the patient, "It's all very easy for you because you don't have any disability." "Oh, haven't I?" replied the attendant. "Look." Pulling up the legs of his trousers, he disclosed that he was not wearing just one artificial limb, but two.

You see loved ones too many times we doubt or we get depressed and discouraged and we are inclined to say, "Jesus, it was easy for you. You were God and You could not sin. You never tasted the abundance of daily temptation, toil, and frustration, like I have to". Yet **Hebrews 4:15** tells us "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin."

So the next time you find yourself doubting you can finish the race, look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. The next time you're depressed about giving up things for God, just look to Jesus who gave up even more. Or the next time you're discouraged, remember the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus bearing the sins of the world on the cross as God turned His back, to say "I love you" to all of us. Because it's only that kind of compassion that can come from a tender, loving heart.

And so Peter continues and reminds us if we want the church to function properly then **thirdly** we need to **love as brothers**. **1 Peter 3:8+9** "Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing".

Literally speaking, this means to be "brother lovers." And loved ones this is so essential for each of us, especially if we want 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' as **2 Peter 3:18** tells us. Brotherly love is so essential if we want to 'convince the world that we truly are disciples of Jesus Christ' as **John 13:35** tells us. Because the truth of the matter is if we don't love each other like this then John tells us that we don't even love God.

John says in **1 John 4:20** "If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." In fact John says you don't even know God back in **1 John 4:7+8** "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

So let me ask you, **do you truly love your brothers and sisters in Christ?** Well one simple way to find out is by asking yourself; **do I even know my brothers and sisters in Christ?** Because if you don't even know them, **how can you honestly say that you are a brother lover?**

You see that's why we have fellowship meals and fellowship emphasis months, so that we can get to know each other and to encourage each other to love each other as we should.

Which brings me to the **fourth** requirement we need if the church is to function properly. **1 Peter 3:8+9** “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

Peter says be **tender-hearted**, it's the kind of heart that is full of compassion and capable of loving your brethren. It's the total opposite of being cold-hearted, where we are insensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Listen church ask yourself, **how would you want people to respond to you if you confessed a sin struggle to them? Would you really want them to rebuke you and tell you, you need to get it sorted out straight away? Or would you rather they listened patiently and prayed for you and tried to help you through those struggles?**

Would you really want them to throw book, chapter and verse in your face and tell the whole church so they can disfellowship you until you get it sorted? Or would you rather have them show compassion and try to help because they love you? Yes 'dis-fellowshipping' a brother or sister in Christ maybe needed at some point but that's the last resort.

And so Peter says we need to be **tender-hearted** towards each other and then he gives us another requirement if we want the church to function properly. **1 Peter 3:8+9** “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

Peter says I want you to be **courteous**, in other words I want you to be humble in spirit, I want you to be kind to each other. You know loved ones people who are filled with themselves have got no room to fill their lives with God. People who possess an arrogant or proud spirit do not bother to be courteous.

When Jesus writes to the church in Laodicea, he says in **Revelation 3:15-17** “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth! Because you say, “I am rich and have acquired great wealth, and need nothing,” but do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.”

God can only fill those who are not filled with themselves. Christians are supposed to imitate their Lord and Savior, and not think so highly of themselves that they cannot be kind and courteous to others. **Philippians 2:3-5** “Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had.”

A young boy was overheard asking his playmate, "Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time?" "No," came the answer, "not if I had some like my Grandma's. She always sees when people are tired or sad, and she knows just what to do to make them feel better. One day I asked her how she could see that way all the time. She told me it was the way she had learned to look at things as she grew older." After thinking for a minute, the first boy concluded, "Yeah, I guess you're right. It must be her glasses."

As Christians, we need to be like that grandmother. We should look at our neighbours as our Saviour did. He always had compassion on the masses. Jesus Himself said that He came **"not to be served to but to serve"** in **Mark 10:45** and He is the example we should follow.

A few years ago there was a cartoon that showed a little child stumbling over some stones in the road. With a look of hurt surprise on his face, he asked his mother, "Mommy, why don't you look where I'm going?" That says it well doesn't it? Our responsibility as believers is to look not only on our own interests, but the interests of others too.

Another requirement we need for the church to function properly is to have the attitude which **returns a blessing for evil**. **1 Peter 3:8+9** “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

Now remember Peter is talking about our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ here. When a brother or sister in Christ does us evil, we are to respond with a blessing. And I know this is totally against our human nature but he gives us two reasons as to why this is important.

He says **number one**, we are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ Himself. He says **number two**, when we return a blessing for evil then we too may be blessed in turn from God Himself.

And so loved ones, Peter has just given us **six things** that we need to have toward one another if the church is going to function properly. They are part of what constitutes the Christ-like character that we are to develop as His disciples. And in order to help us fulfil those duties, in order to help us to keep motivated, Peter quotes from **Psalm 34**.

1 Peter 3:10-12 “For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

He says in order to keep you focused on having the proper relationship with each other let me tell you why. He says, that we might **"love life and see good days"**. Now I don't know of a single human being who doesn't want to enjoy life to the full everyday. I don't know of anyone who gets up in the morning and thinks to themselves, **'I wonder just how miserable of a day I can have today?'**

I mean everyone wants to enjoy life as they experience it from day to day, **don't they?** But the problem is too often, many people make their own lives miserable by their own self-seeking, self-destructive attitudes. People, who are constantly complaining, contentious, retaliating to evil with evil, people who only make a situation a lot worse.

But Peter quotes David's words from the **Psalm 34** and asks **do you want to know the secret to loving life and seeing good days?** **1 Peter 3:10** “For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.”

In other words don't get involved in slander, don't get involved in backbiting. Don't get involved in complaining, lying, murmuring, and grumbling. You see loved ones that's the way the world acts, when they hear someone say something bad about them or if someone does something evil towards them they want to fight back.

But Christians don't act that way, Christians should know the secret and they know and understand that fighting back and getting involved in these things doesn't solve anything, all it does is make the situation worse. Christians should know what to do and Peter says we should not be pursuing any of those evil things but what we should be pursuing is to do good and seeking peace. **1 Peter 3:11** “Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it”.

And how do we pursue doing good and seeking peace? Well simply by doing what we've just looked at. **1 Peter 3:8+9** “Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”.

Do you want your life to be a pleasant experience? Peter says, make the best out of difficult situations, make good situations even better. Because when we do these things then we have the assurance that the Lord Himself will be open to us. **1 Peter 3:12** “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Loved ones it's only when we are like-minded, compassionate, loving each other as we should, tender-hearted, courteous, blessing people who do evil against us, can we ensure that His gracious eyes will watch over us and His ears will be open to our prayers.

Turn your Bibles to **Proverbs 6** just before we finish and notice how many things are mentioned which are an abomination to God and are the direct opposite of how we are to be. **Proverbs 6:16-19** “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers”.

God says, **we are to be courteous** but He also says, **He hates a proud look**. God says, **we are to be compassionate** but He also says, **abusing the innocent is an abomination to Him**. God says, **we are to be tender-hearted** but He also says, **He hates a cold heart that thinks evil of others**.

God says, **we are to return good for evil** but He also says, **those who respond quickly with evil, He hates**. God says, **we are to be of one mind** but He also says, **if we sow discord by murmuring and complaining, we are abominable in His sight**.

Loved ones, for the Lord's church to function properly let us continue to do good and seek peace with one another as the family of God should. I know it's hard sometimes but with the Lord's help and if we seek His will and do it, we can be the kind of family that God wants us to be.