

Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

Dr. Michael O. Oyedokun II, Senior Pastor/Founder
pastor@lovecommunitybc.org
Wednesday, October 2, 2024



Part 6 - Building Relationships (Church Members)

Are relationships important? I am not just focusing on Marriage or Dating but every relationship you have with others. Should relationships be healthy? Should relationships be cultivated? Should we work to mend, restore and rebuild broken relationships? Let's look at what God says in scripture concerning our relationships with one another:

The Bible ranks healthy relationships as the most important thing in life. A Jewish religious expert asked Jesus (Matt. 22:36), "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied (Matt. 22:37-40):

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

RELATIONSHIPS: CHURCH MEMBERS

The importance of helping members develop friendships within your church cannot be overemphasized. Relationships are the glue that holds a church together.

Research shows the more friendships a person has in a congregation, the less likely they are to become inactive or leave.

While some relationships will spontaneously develop by chance, the friendship factor in assimilation is too crucial to leave to chance. You can't just hope members will make friends in the church. You must encourage it, plan for it, structure for it, and facilitate it.

Here are five characteristics of positive relationships at church.

Growth: People are growing in their relationships with each other and with God. They may serve in one capacity together, then create their own projects. Or they may move from only attending on Sunday to becoming a member of the church. Growth is evident.

Responsibility: People can take responsibility for their own part in relationships. They don't blame others and actively work on their own "stuff."

Positivity: People in your church spend more time talking positively than negatively – especially in regard to how they communicate to and about one another.

Lightness: They have a sense of humor. When things go wrong, they can see the lighter side and even seek it out.

Direct: People work on person-to-person relationships. They don't triangle-in other people with gossip or complaints.

Our lives as Christians in this fallen world are a battle (Ephesians 6:10-20). The devil doesn't want to see our churches thrive with loving relationships that are filled with godliness, grace, encouragement and forgiveness. He desires to see us torn apart, battling, and waging war against each other because if we're so caught up in our own sinful issues our focus will not be on Christ. Sometimes it seems easier to sit at home and listen to our favorite online pastor or watch Sunday morning worship on our televisions. Church can be messy and difficult. Building relationships takes effort and sacrifice. We live in a self-centered culture and sadly this has crept into our churches. God didn't design us to be loners in our Christian walk (Hebrews 10:24-25 but desires us to be in a local body where "love and good deeds" can be lived out among family.

Do you look at those in your church and see them as your family? If you are in Christ, then your brothers and sisters in the faith are your family. Sometimes because they are family, we can treat them like our own immediate family members. We can hold a grudge because they said something we didn't appreciate. We can judge them by their words or actions. We can speak poorly of them to others. We so often forget they – just like us – our sinners saved by grace who don't always look or act like their heavenly Father but look and act more like their old selves before new life in Christ.

Caring for each other in the body of Christ is each of our responsibility. It isn't just to be put on the church leadership. We are all responsible to see and the meet the needs of the body of Christ.

Galatians 6:10 – "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

How many times have you read those verses in Acts 2:42-46 and pondered what that would look like if this is how the body of Christ interacted today with one another in our local congregations?

Acts 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

There is so much in this text, but I want to pull out what it looks like to have true Christian fellowship within our local churches. One of the first criteria I want to address is that Christian fellowship can only happen between people who are saved. This means those that have been born again, those that have repented and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. True Christian fellowship begins among believers who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Devotion to the Lord's People

The believers in the early church were devoted to one another, in verse 42 above the text reads literally, "They were continually devoting themselves to the fellowship." We can't devote ourselves to Christ (the Head of the body) without being devoted to the church (His body). It is too easy to become offended and cut ourselves off from fellowship. Hebrew 10:25 commands us not to forsake the assembly of the saints and verses like Colossians 3:13 encourage us to forgive each other and bear with one another.

Being Together

Fellowship cannot happen if you are not part of a local church. Even within our local bodies some of our congregations can be large and it may be hard to have close fellowships with other believers, so we need to be intentional. We can only have deep fellowship if we are spending time with each other and getting involved in each other's lives.

This may mean taking the time to attend small group bible studies or prayer meetings. It means being intentional in planning times to get together with those in your church body. Take the time to open your home to others and invite them for dinner or coffee.

"Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people." Charles Spurgeon

Doing Life Together Brings Compassion

One of the biggest benefits of being together is it brings about knowing people on a more deeper intimate level. You begin to truly love one another as you see each other's weaknesses and strengths. You begin to understand the difficulties of their lives and can have true compassion for them.

Most of the time we find ourselves judging others because we know nothing about them personally. We are judging as the world does on the outside and we never take the time to understand what is going on with them on the inside.

You love your immediate family unconditionally because you are so familiar with their strengths and weaknesses. You love them because you spend time with them truly getting to know all about them and can see beyond their weaknesses and come to love them just as they are – a work in progress.

Your fellow brothers and sisters in the faith are works in progress and if you would spend some time just getting beyond the superficial and learn more about them your love for them would grow and you would find yourself offering much grace and forgiveness during times of misunderstanding or difficulties.

Conclusion

We are not going to find a perfect church here on this earth. Our immediate families aren't perfect. We're not perfect and come with our own issues. The most important point I want you to take from this post is to, to devote yourself to the Lord and continue to learn to love and serve the body of Christ. As we are obedient to this work set before us by the Lord (Ephesians 2:10), He will continue to add daily to the number those being saved (Acts 2:47).

Material from: Building Loving Relationships in Your Church Family
by Marci Ferrell