

Week 6 Foundation-Staying Together

Summary

Part of being an intentional congregation is a commitment to stay together. Our choice to stay together is much more than simply an expression of what we want, it is the recognition that there is something powerful expressed through our togetherness. Last week we explored the idea of living with differences and we express our ability to live with differences by staying together. The commitment to stay together is a commitment to live in the power of the Spirit, the power that comes from above and not to live in the comfort of the flesh. There are an endless number of reasons to limit our relationships with one another. But there is one important reason to fight against all of them, to demonstrate that we are empowered with a Spirit from above and not by the desires of our flesh. Staying together is one of the most visible ways that we demonstrate the truth of the gospel message....that God's power can change your life.

Week 6 – Staying Together

Power of God on display

John 13:33f

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

1 John 3:10f

10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. ...16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence

John 17:20f – A close connection between unity with God and with one another

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

1 Cor 3:1-4, 16f; 6:1f, 11:17f – Division is worldly thinking

3:1 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?....16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

6:1 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! {[4] Or matters, do you appoint as judges men of little account in the church?} 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers! 7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

11:17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! 23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he

took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Luke 6:32f – Live by a higher power

27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' lend to `sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Matt 18 – Being together is associated with presence of Christ

18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be {[18] Or have been}bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be {[18] Or have been}loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Blind to Differences

Staying together requires that we focus on our unity in the Spirit as sons and daughters of God instead of our differences. Some the differences we are called to be blind to include: socio-economics, race, gender, skills, personality, family background, even our sinful past.

- ❖ Gal 3:28 – race, ethnicity, gender
- ❖ Rom 12 – gifts of the spirit

Skills / Tools to Stay Together

- ❖ Living by Spirit – Gal 5:13f
- ❖ Watch Your Language – Eph 4:17-5:21
- ❖ Forgiveness – Col 3:12-17
- ❖ Respect / honor– 1 Cor 12, Rom 12:6f
- ❖ Sacrifice – 1 John 3:16; 1 Cor 6:1f
- ❖ Value the Cross – 1 Cor 4:6 (humility & cross values)
- ❖ Mutual Submission – Eph 6:1

Power of Together

- ❖ We demonstrate God's power at work
- ❖ We are challenged in our faith...as we live with differences
- ❖ We imitate the relationship between God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
- ❖ We find a family that we may not have had growing up
- ❖ We experience genuine fellowship
- ❖ We find "We" in a world of me's

Things that Challenge our "togetherness"

- ❖ Time
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Low-touch culture
- ❖ Consumer Thinking
- ❖ Sin
- ❖ Hurt Feelings
- ❖ Disaffiliation