

"One Another"

Many people today are missing out on the value of a church family. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring the value of being part of a loving church family.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures contain God's revealed Word. We don't trust in feelings or hunches; we want the word of God. We don't pretend to receive special revelations in the 21st century. We trust in what the Spirit told the apostles in the first century. Jesus said the Spirit of truth would guide them into all the truth in John 16:13. We trust the Lord and the Spirit did what Scripture says. If Christians were given all the truth in the first century, we're not lacking anything by going to the Scriptures, which were written in the first century. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

When I became a Christian, the Lord Himself forgave my sins and added me to His family, His household, the church. Acts 2:41 says, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." The people who were baptized were the ones given the promise found in Acts 2:38 to 39: "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.'"

The Lord adds His saved people to His family, because every person needs a healthy, biblical church home. And we hope you're worshipping regularly with such a congregation. We need a church family. Now we offer this study on church families and One Another free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube. We also have a church map, with congregations found all over the nation. We hope you'll worship with a local church soon.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Acts 2:42 to 47, and examine the value of getting involved with a healthy, biblical church family.

Our reading today comes from Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, and talk about the beginning of the church. "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." That's a reading from God's holy word.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that the early church was comprised by people who loved each other and who were devoted to serving You. Help us to love each other, and to be devoted to serving You as well. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!"

God has made you as a Christian to be different from the world—and to be a shining light as a child of God! Matthew 5:43 to 48 says, "You have heard that it was said, 'That you shall love your neighbor

and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God holds His people to a higher standard in how they treat others.

The Lord also holds Christians to a higher standard in how they treat one another. The Lord said in John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. And by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." 1 John 3:16 to 18 describes this farther, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." God demands an authentic, genuine love.

Acts 2:42 to 47 describes the early church at Jerusalem and how "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, (that is the Lord's Supper) and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together they had all things in common; they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." Well who wouldn't want to be part of such a church—a praying church, an active church, a sharing church, a teaching church, a fellowshiping church?

No wonder people came into it every day!

Romans 12 and verse 10 says to Christians, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor." Rom. 12:15-16 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." Romans 14:19 reminds us, "So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

Galatians 5 and verse 13 teaches us that "through love (we are) to serve one another." Paul continues to exhort Christians to take care of each other's needs. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Now we should help one another every way that we're able.

We should look out for one another's souls. Galatians 6:1 and 2 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." Now God expects His people to feel a kinship and responsibility for each other. Hebrews 3:13 to 14 says, "But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." We're to watch out for each other's souls and to help each other overcome the struggles of sin.

God wants His people to believe and practice the truth and to live in peace with each other.

Ephesians 4:1 through 3 says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Now some Christians betray their calling by thinking that their job is to slander or degrade their brothers. James 4:11 to 12 warns, "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge. There's only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?" Now, we will all come before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus, who will judge fairly. He will judge us in the way that we judge others (Matthew 7:1 to 5). And the church is no place for unfair judging. The Lord Jesus said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Many spend their time accusing rather than asking to find if the rumors are true.

We must be honest with each other. Ephesians 4:25 says, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." I tell you, we must be kind to each other. Ephesians 4:31 to 32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Being a Christian leaves no place for arrogance or selfishness. Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Again, Colossians 3:12 to 14 says, "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another up, just as you are doing." One way Christians build up one another is by worshiping together in prayer, song, and the Lord's Supper. Colossians 3:16 shows the twofold nature of our singing, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Our assembling together is for more than merely worshiping. We also touch each others' lives and hearts. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and to good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some is, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." To consider someone is to give value to that person, to focus your mind on him/her. It means trying to see as the other person sees, feel as the other person feels. Be thoughtful of others and encourage them.

More than that, we must learn to trust each other and to pray for each other. We have all sinned and stand in the need of the grace of God. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Now once God forgives a brother or sister of sin, let's also forgive them and be reconciled.

1 Peter 4:8 to 11 says, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, and since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” When we serve others, we glorify God. God made you so that you could serve Him by serving the body of Christ, the church. When I withhold myself from serving, I’m robbing my brethren and I’m robbing God.

The Lord Jesus is serious about our loving and serving one another. He said in Matthew 25:31 to 40, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then He’ll sit on his glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you also did it to me.’” When we serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are indeed serving the Lord Himself.

Now, I owe my brothers and sisters in the Lord my love, because the Lord built the church in local congregations and works through local congregations. Loving my brothers and sisters shows how I love the Lord. I owe my faithful brothers and sisters, my loyalty, my prayers, my financial support, my talents, my faithful attendance, and my heart.

Having served churches for more than a half century, I realize local congregations are filled with fallible and flawed human beings. Not all churches follow the Lord as they should. And when a local church ceases to follow the Lord, we should seek one that does follow Jesus. We don’t want anyone to follow those congregations who hold to error and the commandments of men. “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15 and verse 14).

Let’s think about these things, and pray with me. Heavenly Father, we’re thankful to be members of Your church, the body of Christ. We’re thankful that we can be of your household and be sons and daughters of Yours. Help us Heavenly Father to love others who are sons and daughters of Yours, and to love You with all our heart, our soul, and mind and strength. And help us to be faithful in our service to You, and obey Your will. In Jesus name, we pray, Amen!”

When we get involved and support the Lord’s church, we’re showing our love and support for the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28). And surely, He wouldn’t have made such a great sacrifice if the church didn’t matter. To Jesus, the church is not an option. Jesus relates to the church as a head does to a body (Ephesians 1:22 to 23) and as a husband does to his wife (Ephesians 5 and verse 25). As Christians we must love the church Jesus built, the one He died for died for, and purchased with His own blood.

When people are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, the Lord adds them to the number of His people, the church (Acts 2:41 to 47). Now we’re baptized into the body of Christ, the

church (1 Corinthians 12 verse 13). Salvation and church membership are connected. Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church (Ephesians 5:23). Now if you forsake the church, you're forsaking the Lord Jesus and your forsaking your salvation. By forsaking the church, you're turning away from God and falling away from Christ.

For this reason, I'm calling for every member of the church who's out-of-duty and fallen away to return, to start assembling with the Lord's church and be a part of it. Like the prodigal son, it's time for you to come home to your Father and to your Savior. It's time to get right with God.

Now becoming a Christian means you become a member of the church. To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is an immersion in water. And when we're baptized into Christ, we're baptized into His death; and His blood was shed when He died, and that frees us from sin. Please come to Christ!

Now we hope that today's study about loving One Another, and serving one another because we're members of the body of Christ, has helped you to see the value of the church, and to turn away from the world and to come to be with the people of God.. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches that are in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH on YouTube as well! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry", that's one word, and like the programs as you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. Now if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.