



## Introduction

Family living can be wonderful. Its benefits include protection, provision and encouragement. But family living can also be full of stress with frequent fights and arguments. Often, the family members who love us most are also the source of our greatest pain.

When you became a Christian, you became part of God's Family. The Father loves all of his children. But there are lots of children. The Father has given us some guidelines as to how we should relate to each other. There are guidelines for how we should help each other, and guidelines for what to do when we disagree. This study will explore those guidelines.

## We are Family

Because God adopted you and me, we have a special relationship. We are related to each other because we are related to Him.

<sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 1:12-13

- Circle the right that each person has who believes in Jesus.
- Underline in verse 13 the nature of birth for the children of God.

Each person has a special relationship with the Father. He knows us each individually and completely. Yet relating to the *other* children is a challenge. The family structure allows for **billions** of children. Innumerable barriers separate the children.

We are from different races.

We are from different cultures.

We are from different religious backgrounds.

Yet, despite our many differences, we can have fellowship.

<sup>6</sup> If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:6-7

- In verse 6, underline the action that indicates we do not live according to the truth.
- *Walking in darkness is the same as not inviting Jesus to live within you. You cannot claim to have fellowship with God without Him living inside.*
- In verse 7, circle whom we have fellowship with when we walk in the light.

Having a relationship with Jesus enables us to relate with each other. But do we really need each other?

## Family Barriers

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Paul addressed the problem of barriers to fellowship in the Book of Ephesians.



Starting at verse 11 in Chapter 2, Paul describes the division between Jews and Gentiles. He describes how Jesus destroyed the dividing wall between them, making peace through the cross.

Fellowship in the Bible comes from the Greek word **koinonia**. *Koinonia* means to share in common

## We Need Each Other

God has fashioned the Christian experience in such a way as to make us dependant upon each another. It is impossible to become all that God wants you to be without the help of other Christians.

### Encourage One Another

One reason we need each other is for encouragement. Regular interaction together helps us stay focused on Jesus.

*<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Hebrews 10:24-25**

- In verse 24 underline the thing we are to consider.
- The word "spur" is a translation of the Greek word **paroxusmon**, which means "provoke". It implies that we are to influence each other toward good actions.
- In verse 25, circle what should not be given up.
- Underline the action in verse 25 that we should take toward each other.

### Assisting One Another

One form of encouragement can occur when a brother has difficulties and falls.

*<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: <sup>10</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**

- Circle why two are better than one.
- Underline in verse 10 the benefit of having a friend.
- In verse 10, circle the reason for pitying a man who is alone when he falls.

Another way to assist a brother is with money. Paul asked the Corinthian church to help out the Jerusalem church.

*<sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, <sup>15</sup> as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."*

**2 Corinthians 8:14-15**

- Circle in verse 14 what one is to do who has plenty.
- Underline what you can expect when you are in need.
- Frame the reason why those with plenty should supply those in need.

Sharing our money is a specific way of assisting a brother. But there are often other kinds of need with which brothers need assistance.



### Are you part of a local fellowship?

Not only do you need the gifts of the local believers near you, but also they need the benefit of the gifts God has given you. Don't deny the brethren nearby of your fellowship.

### Be Prepared

Having a friend to help with difficulties is essential. Time spent developing relationships is the only way to prepare friends for emergencies. If you wait until problems occur to build a relationship, it will be too late.

Generosity is a quality that must characterize a Disciple. Explore the benefits of a generous life style in the vDRC Study entitled "Generosity" in the Character section of the vDRC web site

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*  
**Galatians 6:2**

- Underline what we are to carry.
- Circle what such action will fulfill.
- *The law of Christ refers to Jesus' command to love one another.*

Clearly, loving one another is the key to providing assistance.

### Building Up Each Other

We need each other not only for encouragement and assistance. We also need each other to help us toward maturity.

<sup>11</sup> *It was he who gave some to be apostles,  
 some to be prophets,  
 some to be evangelists, and  
 some to be pastors and teachers,*  
<sup>12</sup> *to prepare God's people for works of service,  
 so that the body of Christ may be built up*  
<sup>13</sup> *until we all reach unity in the faith and  
 in the knowledge of the Son of God  
 and become mature,  
 attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*  
**Ephesians 4:11-13**

- In verse 11 circle each of the five types of leaders.
- In verse 12, underline what those leaders are to do.
- In verse 12, frame the kind of work God's people are to do.
- In verse 12, circle the desired result in the body of Christ.
- In verse 13, underline the two areas where we are to reach unity.
- In verse 13 frame the characteristic we are to acquire.
- In verse 13, underline what we are all to attain.

The fact that God wants us to use the gifts he gives us to build each other up is a strong motivation to fellowship together. It is as we share and interact that we help each other grow.

***As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.***  
**Proverbs 27:17**


### Following Our Leaders

Ephesians 4:11 makes it clear that God puts some in positions of leadership. Scripture gives us clear guidelines for leading and following.

<sup>12</sup> *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you,  
 who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.* <sup>13</sup> *Hold them in the  
 highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each  
 other.*  
**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**


- In verse 12, underline those we are to respect.
- In verse 13, circle the way we are to regard them.
- In verse 13, underline why are we to hold them in high regard.

### The Law of Christ

 John 13:34-35  
 James 2:8

### The Gifts of the Spirit

Scripture lists the gifts that God gives to His children in four different places.

 Romans 12:4-8  
 1 Corinthians 12  
 Ephesians 4:11  
 1 Peter 4:10-11

One of the reasons we need each other is that no one has all of the gifts.

You can find out more about Spiritual Gifts in the **vDRC** study "Spiritual Gifts" in **The Disciple's Relation to Men** section of the **vDRC** website.

### Jesus is the Head

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy  
 Colossians 1:18

How are leaders to serve?

<sup>2</sup> *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-  
not because you must, but because you are willing,  
as God wants you to be;  
not greedy for money, but eager to serve;*

<sup>3</sup> *not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

<sup>4</sup> *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

**1 Peter 5:2-4**

- In verse 4, circle the reward that awaits a good leader.
- From verse 2 and 3 fill out the table below:

Attitudes to avoid	Attitudes to demonstrate

## Handling Disagreements

Even though God clearly desires that His children have the same mind with unity of heart, differences of opinion will occur. And, brother may sin against brother resulting in hostility, resentment and hurt. God has provided guidelines for all of these possibilities.

### Disagreements

The Corinthian church was having disagreements among themselves. They attempted to resolve their issues by taking legal action against one another. Paul gave them these words to ponder:

<sup>1</sup> *How is it that when you have something against another Christian, you "go to law" and ask a heathen court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other Christians to decide which of you is right? ...*

<sup>4</sup> *Why then go to outside judges who are not even Christians?*

<sup>5</sup> *I am trying to make you ashamed. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these arguments? ...*

<sup>7</sup> *To have such lawsuits at all is a real defeat for you as Christians. Why not just accept mistreatment and leave it at that? It would be far more honoring to the Lord to let yourselves be cheated. (TLB)*

**1 Corinthians 6:1,4,5,7**

- In verse 5, circle the one who should help decide arguments.
- In verse 7, underline the word that describes the result of lawsuits among Christians.
- In verse 7, circle what action would be more honoring to God than a lawsuit.

### Called to Serve

Jesus made it clear that anyone who leads is required to be a servant.



Matthew 20:26-27  
Matthew 23:11  
Mark 9:35  
Mark 10:43-45  
Luke 22:26-27

Learn more about Christian Servanthood in the vDRC study on "Servanthood" in the Character section of the vDRC website.

### Called to Unity

God desires His children to be unified, having one mind and one purpose.



Romans 15:5  
Ephesians 4:3  
Philippians 2:2-4

Arguing

There are many issues in the Bible where different points of view are possible. Paul gave this advice to Timothy about such discussions:

<sup>23</sup> *Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.* <sup>24</sup> *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*  
**2 Timothy 2:23-24**

- Underline in verse 23 the thing we are to avoid.
- Circle the product of arguments.
- Frame in verse 24 what the Lord's servant should **not** do.
- Underline in verse 24 the things that should characterize the Lord's servant.

Offenses

As children live and work together, things will occur which cause offense. God has laid out specific actions to take for those who have given offense and those who have been hurt by someone else.

<sup>23</sup> *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*  
**Matthew 5:23-24**

- In verse 23, Circle the identity of the one who has committed the offense.
- In verse 24, underline the action to take with the brother.
- *The word reconcile is a translation of the Greek word **diallassoo** which means **to change the mind**. When we reconcile with someone, we need to change his or her mind. Confessing our offense and asking for forgiveness is the primary method to change the mind of another.*

*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*  
**Matthew 18:15**

- Circle the identity of the one who has given offense.
- Underline the action to take.
- Frame the ones who are to participate in the discussion.

Application

Is there some aspect of your life that needs to change as a result of this study?

Describe the action you need to take.

What is your plan for accomplishing the action?

How will you check-up on yourself?

There are some issues of faith that lead to disputes. Taking a stand on such issues is necessary and proper. But the nature of the interchange of ideas is always to be governed by kindness.



Notice that regardless of who is at fault, it is always your responsibility to take the initial step required to repair the broken relationship.