

Relating Biblically

Scripture Focus

3 John 1-8

Key Verse

Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God (3 John 5-6).

Overview

Throughout Scripture a number of metaphors are used for the Church. One such metaphor is a family. The Church, which is composed of believers, is beloved of God and of each other. As such, every Christian has a wonderful opportunity to live out the gospel by relating biblically with his brethren.

Theme

The family of God is a unique group, put together by God, redeemed by His Son, and empowered by His Spirit. Therefore, we have much cause to rejoice and live together in faith.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will grow in his understanding of the Church and what it means to related biblically as a part of God's family.

Outline

- I. **Unity Comes When Spiritual Growth Is Supreme (1-4)**
- II. **Unity Comes When Serving God Is Supported (5-8)**

Getting Started

Ask your class if they would say the following family is unified based on the facts given: Both parents successful; eat dinner every night at table with kids; help kids with homework; children are models of health and discipline, well behaved and willing to serve. Most will say that this is a family of unity, but the fact that you left out is that the parents are two lesbians, the son is addicted to internet pornography, and the daughter is convinced that the lifestyle of the two women in her home is the best life choice for her as well. Very quickly our assessment of unity changes.

Ask class if they would say the following church is unified based on the facts given: 200% increase in attendance last year; constructed a new building, paying cash; 4 new staff members added; increase of 125% in offerings; every 5-year goal met last year. Looking at those facts most will say that church is unified in its mission.

Without the fact that this church is a satanic church most would never guess the members are broken not in unity. Ask: What is the standard of unity? What factors must be in place for us to say a relationship, church, or business is truly unified? What are the criteria by which we measure true unity under Christ? Remind the class that we are seeing an epidemic of broken relationships. Couples are living under the same roof, but their hearts have drifted away. Children are expressing resentment and

bitterness towards parents. Parents are failing to disciple their children in God's Word. Churches are fighting over matters not eternal.

Searching the Scriptures

With this entire break-down of unity there is a cry from believers; they are expressing the desires of their hearts, which are:

1. They are searching for direction in life – many have done the same thing for so long, yet feel they are going down the wrong road.
2. They want to impact their homes, community and world for Christ; it is just not happening.
3. They desire to be involved in God's work, but busy schedules often prevent them from doing so.
4. They want to experience God's power in their lives, but rarely do.
5. They long for unity in all relationships, but there always seems to be some issue preventing that from happening.

Most believers would agree that #5 would fix the rest of their needs. If they just had unity they would have direction for life, impact their homes, prioritize to serve, and walk in pathways of God's power. Use these in your lesson to demonstrate God's Word is the answer to each of these issues. The question this lesson answers is "How can unity be restored in my life?" Woven within the answer is the **Relating Biblically mandate** of every believer.

I. Unity Comes When Spiritual Growth Is Supreme (vv. 1-4)

Explanation:

v. 1: "the elder" – John the aged Apostle of Jesus Christ. The last living Apostle. He was presiding over the churches of Asia Minor with the mission to protect those believers from doctrinal degradation. He would fight to the end. There was no way he would allow the unity of the church, purchased with the blood of Christ, to be compromised.

"to...Gaius" – Name means "one reconciled to God." His house was a place used regularly as a place for the church to gather. This was a letter to the church in which Gaius was a leader. John was unable to come at that time, probably due to poor health, so he wrote a letter of encouragement and warning. It was a love letter that Gaius was in great need of receiving.

"love in truth" – more than emotion or sentiment. What really connected these two men was their salvation in Christ.

v. 2: "prosper" – succeed, be strong, well advanced.

"all things" – every area of your life from business, to church, to family...

"health" – sound; like a bulkhead

"soul" – relationship with Christ. When John looked at Gaius' life the strongest characteristic, the great strength he saw, was Gaius' walk with Christ. John was praying for everything in Gaius' life to be as healthy as his walk with Christ.

Ask: How would you feel if someone prayed that prayer for you? If they

prayed, Lord, let _____ be as healthy as their walk with You; be as financially secure as their prayer life; be as strong in business as their devotion time; be as close to their wife as to You; be as open in conversing with the children as they are with You...One of the keys to relating biblically is being strong in Christ. Our Southern Baptist missionaries are the cream of the crop. They are men and women who walk close to the heart of God and find themselves daily at His feet for the very basic needs of life. A close look at most of our Southern Baptist missionaries would cause us to pray,

“Lord, may they prosper in all things just as their soul prospers.” Let it be our goal for that same prayer to be voiced for each of us.

v. 3: “brethren came and testified” – John had sent a delegation to observe the local churches and assess their health. This delegation was also a missionary team with the primary responsibility of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. The highlight of this delegation’s trip was seeing the faithful life of Gaius. “**truth...in you**” – God’s Word and life had been planted in Gaius’ heart, and it was obvious to all who knew him. “**walk in truth**” – the greatest evidence of a changed life is a changed lifestyle. The most telling sign of new birth is new life. The defining evidence of salvation is a life that is growing in Christ likeness.

v. 4: “no greater joy” – exuberant cheer; gladness of heart
“**children...walk in truth**” – That which brought the greatest joy to the heart of the aged apostle was seeing that the one whom he had made an investment in was walking in truth.

Illustration:

Application:

Challenge the members of your class to individually: Invest their life in a person so that they might also experience the joy of seeing them walk in truth. Ask: Who is number one in your life? Encourage your class members to have the goal of being stronger in their walk with Christ than anything else in their lives. Lead them to read their Bible daily, develop a consistent prayer life, make choices from God’s Word, etc.

[Find an example of someone who has made an investment in another person who is serving the Lord. Perhaps you could enlist a class member to share a testimony of investing his/her life or of someone who invested in him/her.]

II. Unity Comes When Serving God Is Supported (vv. 5-8)

Explanation:

v. 5: “you do faithfully” – his work ethic was built over a long time of being faithful to the call of God.

“**whatever**” – any task he was called on to do that would advance the kingdom of God was carried out with precision. Perhaps more than any other characteristic this is one found in the missionaries’ make up. A willingness not only to go wherever and whenever, but also a desire to do anything it takes to reach people. That service may be providing medical help, building a

house, or digging a trench so a village can receive water. Our Southern Baptist missionaries have a “whatever” spirit of service that God uses to open many doors for them to share the gospel.

“**strangers**” – These strangers that Gaius was taking good care of were actually a team of missionaries that were passing through. They were not well known, but the fact that they were known by Jesus and were making Jesus known was enough for Gaius to open his home and heart to them.

vs. 6: “borne witness...before the church” – this delegation returned to John with a testimony before the entire church of Gaius’ love and faithful service. The early church had a practice of giving God glory for changing lives, so they did not stop short of their testimony of changed lifestyles. They were encouragers of each other for the glory of God. It is a needed mark of the church today to publicly thank God for the faithfulness demonstrated in the life of a fellow believer.

[Take time to publicly encourage a member of your class right now for an act of service you know the member has recently carried out. Thank the member before the entire class for being an example of faithfulness to the Lord.]

“**love**” – The love they were celebrating was a love that did not necessarily supply what the person loved desired. This kind of love does not give what one thinks he needs, but gives what one really needs. The need is supplied according to God’s standard. When we were lost, God did not give us what we thought we needed, but rather what we really needed, namely Jesus Christ. Gaius was giving those in need what would serve as a catalyst for the gospel to spread through them.

“**send them forward**” – literally “to help on one’s journey.” It was the responsibilities of the church to help this delegation of missionaries go forward on their journey. They were commissioned to supply the missionaries with what they really needed to get the gospel out.

“**Worthy of God**” – The church was to send the missionaries on their journey as if they were sending Jesus. It was the call upon those not going to provide for those who were going. In that call was the directive to give the team of missionaries all the supplies they would give to Jesus in order to make this journey all it needed to be.

v. 7: “for His name’s sake” – The missionaries were not only representing all believers as they went out spreading the gospel, they were ambassadors of Christ.

“**from the gentiles**” – Taking money from those they were trying to reach on their missionary journey would have proven a hindrance to those people coming to Christ. The missionary efforts were to be totally supported by God’s people alone.

v. 8: “receive” – Literally support. It is the duty of the church that stays behind to support those who go ahead.

“fellow-workers” – Helpers. As the church gave financially to support those that were going to spread the gospel in other lands, they became fellow laborers. It was like they were working hand-in-hand with those that were going. Their financial investment allowed them to serve as co-laborers in the missionary mandate to spread the gospel.

Illustration:

Application: For security reasons different names will be used for the following couple: Bud at one time was a very successful stockbroker. He and his wife Sue were living the American dream: large house, 2 SUV’s, 3 children, etc. They took their preacher up on a challenge to get alone as a family and pray, “Lord, whatever You want to do with our lives, here we are send us.” God got a hold of their hearts and they surrendered to His call to missions. Sue no longer has her groceries delivered to her home; she pushes a wooden wheelbarrow with now 4 kids to an outdoor market to get their daily supply of food. Bud no longer wears \$2500 suits to work, but puts on one of the 3 pairs of pants that he owns, trudges through the snow in order that people who have no other Christian around them may hear the gospel and be saved. His name will never again be highlighted in a business journal, but their testimony among the saints and those brand-new believers he is reaching with the gospel is, “Bud you do whatever you do faithfully.” Ask: What is God calling you to do? Have you gotten alone with God lately and asked, “Lord, whatever You want to do with our lives, here we are send us.” It may be a mission from your house or from a shanty in the bush of Africa or from a cellar apartment in China, but the best place in the world for your family to be, the safest place in the world for your family to be is right where God calls you. The most effective way to develop, maintain, and grow unity in all your relationships is to invest your money, your energy, and your heart in the missionary mandate of seeing souls saved for the glory of God.

Making It Personal

At the end of class, ask your class to help you make a list on the board of five practical ways a small group of Christians could put into practice the principles you taught today. As this list comes together, you may have a great opportunity to lead your class to take action on one of these practical examples.

Review

Remind your class of the great joy and privilege it is to do the work God is doing among them. Encourage the members of your class to take what they have learned to heart and then to action. As James teaches us, God’s desire is that we would not merely be hearers of the word, but effectual doers.

Memory Verse

Encourage your class to memorize 3 John 5:-6.