

God's Family

LESSON 9: BE AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Although God's family is a wonderful blessing, no one must make the mistake of thinking that God's family will never experience difficulties. After all, God's family is made up of people who (though they ought to be committed to doing what is right) are capable of doing what is wrong and hurting others. It takes active commitment, then, to be at peace with one another.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13

God expects His family to be at peace (live in harmony) with one another. He expects them to live in the unity of the Spirit according to the truths He has revealed (John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 1:10) and have no division among them (1 Corinthians 12:25). But, it takes effort on the part of each family member to live at peace so there will not be conflict (Mark 9:50; Romans 12:16-21). This is the responsibility of Christians toward God and toward those who lead them. For example, it is one way that Christians can show honor toward the elders/shepherds of the local church by not making their jobs more difficult by fighting with other members of God's family. For, God does not want His family fussing, fighting, and dividing with one another over things that don't matter to Him (Titus 3:9-11)!

GALATIANS 5:15, 25-26

It is sad when members of God's family fail to conduct themselves properly as brothers and sisters (e.g. in love and service, vv. 13-14). Still, there are many times Christians fight against one another like two animals that fight until one or both die. This must never be! Those in God's family must put off such sinful works of the flesh (vv. 19-21) and put on the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23). Living in this way will result in not being boastful/conceited to think more highly of yourself than you should

(which causes many fights). Then, living according to the way of the Spirit will keep people from provoking one another by challenging or irritating them in a negative sense. Furthermore, living according to the ways of God's Spirit will stop the envy (ill will/resentment due to another's perceived advantages) that is sometimes shown.

JAMES 4:11-12; 5:9

Many conflicts within God's family can be traced back to someone establishing a standard that differs from God's and being critical of (e.g. by speaking against or slandering) and judging brothers and sisters who do not live up to their standards. Thus, the one who does so makes himself/herself the lawgiver and judge instead of being one who is expected to obey God's law and leave those judgments to Him. Therefore, members of God's family must be extremely careful about the words spoken to and about other Christians and the judgments that are made (John 7:24; James 3:1-12)! Then, it can also be all too easy for brothers and sisters in God's family to thoughtlessly complain about other members of God's family. Rather than working together and trying to help and build up one another, words are used to tear down and express frustrations with one another. All such things must be eliminated among God's family for there to be peace!

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3

Despite God's instructions that urge peace between members of His family, there will always be challenges and problems that develop over time. This had happened in the Philippian church between two women (Euodia and Syntyche). These sisters who had contended for the gospel alongside Paul needed help to work out their problems and be reconciled. Similarly, sometimes there will be disagreements and conflicts that happen in churches today. When they do, they should not be ignored (as they can cause larger problems) and other mature brothers and sisters ought to help the situation be resolved so that both parties can agree and work together in the Lord!

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

Disputes between members of God's family can vary in their seriousness, even to the point of desiring to have human courts settle the matter (e.g. civil litigations). Yet, God condemns such action as being unacceptable for members of His family. Instead of looking for those who are ungodly (whether judges or other people) to solve their conflicts, disputing Christians ought to search for a wise brother or sister to help them work out the disputes! Furthermore, before Christians take their conflicts with members of God's family to unbelievers, God says it would be better for them to accept the wrong that was done against them and allow themselves to be cheated! Therefore, a Christian must not compound the wrong by taking it before unbelievers.

MATTHEW 5:21-26

Sin against your brothers and sisters extends to anger and insults – not just physical harm. Furthermore, Jesus expects the members of His family to seek reconciliation with one another. This involves actively seeking to correct any wrongs you may have committed. So, if you know of something your brother or sister has against you, Jesus says that you should go to him/her and try to reach an agreement. Perhaps a wrong was actually committed and you can repent. Or, perhaps there was a misunderstanding that can be cleared up. Either way, the open dialogue of communication will enable two willing hearts to reach a Biblical solution so there can be peace! Unfortunately, many conflicts are gossiped about, avoided, or run away from rather than properly resolved (also see Matthew 18:15-17).

CONCLUSION

Although God's family members still fight the flesh so that conflicts do arise at times, God expects His family to be actively pursuing peace with one another. They must be aware of the many potential sources of conflict and do their best to avoid being part of unrighteous disputes. Then, when disagreements and conflicts do arise, they must seek reconciliation in Christ.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What kind of effort is involved in living at peace with one another?

How does living at peace demonstrate honor toward spiritual leaders?

How will putting off the works of the flesh and putting on the fruit of the Spirit result in proper conduct toward one another?

How do judgments impact the peace experienced among Christians?

How do criticisms and complaints impact the peace experienced among Christians?

What role do other Christians play in helping to resolve conflicts among brothers and sisters?

Why should human courts and worldly people not be seen as the solution to conflicts within God's family?

What is required of you when a brother or sister has something against you?

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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