

Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry
Teacher's Guide
Series 1: Lesson #7
"You Were Formed For God's Family", Part B
(from *The Purpose Driven Life*¹)

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

Preparation:

1. Read the section for Day 16-18 in *The Purpose Driven Life*.
2. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; there are too many to use in the class, so be selective.
3. Read through the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
4. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
 - attendance/prayer request sheets
 - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don't** staple the pages.)
 - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
5. Other optional materials to bring:
 - White board marker and eraser
 - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

Before and as students arrive:

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don't have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

Focus points for this Lesson:

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to summarize in conclusion. If white board and marker are available, as you conclude and summarize each point, write it on the board.)

- Life without love is worthless.
- Love will last forever.
- The best expression of love is time.
- The best time to love is now.
- I'm called to belong, not just believe.
- We need each other.

“You Were Formed For God’s Family”, Part B

Before beginning the lesson ask the students to write a response to the following question in the space provided on their handout. You will want to refer back to this and ask them to share at appropriate times during the lesson.

When you die, what is the most important thing that you would like to leave for your heirs?

Introduction

Loneliness is one of the saddest conditions in life. Within each of us is the need to love and be loved and when that need is not met the result can be devastating, leading to depression or even suicide, drug and alcohol abuse or any number of other problems. God created us for relationships. He intends for us to love and share our lives with Him and with each other. He established the church as a means to fulfill this need. In this lesson and the next one, we will explore exactly what God’s purpose and plan for our relationships is.

Day 16: What Matters Most

The Best Use of Life Is Love

According to God, life is all about love. When Jesus was confronted by one of the Pharisees and asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” His reply was simple and direct: (**Matthew 22 NIV**)

³⁷. . . " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Again, in (**Verse to Remember**) **Galatians 5:14 (NIV)**, Paul says: *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

We have all sorts of options about how we will live our lives and use our time, but the only use that will provide real purpose and fulfillment and the only use that truly meets God’s expectations is a life of love. Relationships must take the highest place on our priority list. “A life without love is really worthless.” (p. 124) “Life minus love equals zero.” (p. 125)

We can observe what matters the most in life when we observe what matters the most at the time of death. Most people when they are on the brink of stepping into eternity, don’t call for someone to surround them with their prized possessions, rather, they want to be surrounded by those they love. That is what matters most. How sad it is when a person comes to the time of death and there is no one there for them because they spent their whole life with “things” as their priority instead of relationships. By contrast, how beautiful it is when someone

passes from this life surrounded by people with whom they had built cherished relationships.

1 Corinthians 13 (NLT)

¹ *If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. ³If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.*

Are there some universal characteristics of love? (responses and discussion)

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 identifies for us what the characteristics of real love are:

⁴*Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. ⁶It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

As human beings, these qualities do not come naturally to us. We are, by nature, selfish and self-centered and God has had to command us to love others. We have to learn and work at real love, and sometimes that can be very difficult.

What are some reasons why loving others can be very difficult for us to do? (responses and discussion)

Regardless of how difficult it might be, we must keep working at it. No matter how many times we fail, we must keep working at it.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT) *Let love be your highest goal, . . .*

Also in **1 Corinthians 13**, we learn that love is the greatest of only three things that we will take from Earth into eternity. Love will last forever.

⁸*Love will last forever, . . . ¹³There are three things that will endure--faith, hope, and love--and the greatest of these is love.*

Should this knowledge affect the priorities that we place on how we spend our time, effort, and resources here on earth? (responses and discussion)

It should because we will one day be judged by God on how well we learned to love.

Matthew 25:40 (NLT)

. . . `I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

Galatians 5:6 (NLT)

. . . What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

The Best Way to Express Our Love is With Our Time

Our time is our greatest asset but it is not unlimited. We can make more money, but we all only have 24 hours a day. How we spend those hours reveals where we place our priorities. The most important way that we can show our love is with our time. "The most desired gift of love is not diamonds or roses or chocolate. It is focused attention." (P. 127) "Whenever we give our time, we are making a sacrifice, and sacrifice is the essence of love." (p. 127)

1 John 3:18 (CEV)

¹⁸Children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it.

We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving – of ourselves.

Ephesians 5:2 (NLT)

²Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

The Best Time To Love Is Now

We don't know how long we or anyone else will be alive on this earth, so we should not delay in expressing our love. The Bible expresses the need for a sense of urgency where love is concerned.

Galatians 6:10 (NLT)

¹⁰Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially to our Christian brothers and sisters.

Ephesians 5:16 (NLT)

¹⁶Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days.

Proverbs 3:27 (NLT)

²⁷Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them.

Look at your answer to the question about what you consider the most important thing to leave your heirs. How does your answer reflect your priorities? Did you choose something that will last forever?

The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now.

What greater legacy or inheritance could we possibly leave than one that will last forever, love?

Additional Scriptures

1 Peter 2:17

John 13:35

Matthew 22:37-40

Matthew 25:34-46

John 3:16

Day 17: A Place to Belong

Does being a member of a/the Church make any difference in being a Christian? Why? How? (responses and discussion)

Because God IS love and it is, therefore, so important to Him, He made each of us with the capacity to love and the need to be loved. This naturally means that we were not intended to live in isolation, but rather that we have the need for relationships and the need for community. We fulfill our need for relationships within the family and with friendships. God's plan for fulfilling the need for community was in the establishment of His church. There are many people who think that as long as they have become a Christian it is not necessary to become involved with a church. The Bible teaches otherwise.

The church is so important that Jesus died for it. **Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)**
. . . just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Verse to remember: Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

From this verse we see that as Christians, we belong or have membership in a single "body" as well as having a responsibility to each other. Being a member means more than just having our names in the directory. It is much more than just attending a worship service every now and then. It involves more than being a member of an organization. It is being part of an "organism", a living entity.

Just as every different part of the human body has a specific job that contributes to the functioning of the whole body, in the same way, God gave each of us different abilities and talents that He wants us to contribute as individual parts of the functioning of the church. We cannot contribute if we are not a part. And, in

the same way that a part of our body would die if it were cut off, we die spiritually when we cut ourselves off from the church.

Ephesians 4:16 (NLT)

Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Other reasons why we need to be part of the church:

- It identifies us as believers. (John 13:35)
- The coming together in love of so many diverse individuals is a powerful witness to the world. (Galatians 3:28, John 17:21, 1 Corinthians 12:27)
- We learn how to get out of our self-centered isolation and how to get along with and care about others. (1 Corinthians 12:26, 1 John 3:16)
- We grow and mature in our faith and relationship with God through our relationships with fellow Christians. (Ephesians 4:6)
- It allows us to fulfill the unique role that God has given each of us for His Church. (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- It allows us to be part of Christ's mission in the world. (Ephesians 2:10)
- We are able to encourage and strengthen each other so we don't slip into sin. (Hebrews 3:13, James 5:19, Hebrews 13:17)

We need God, but we also need each other. That is God's design.

Additional Scriptures

Genesis 2:18	1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-27	Ephesians 2:21, 22
Ephesians 3:6	Colossians 2:19	1 Thessalonians 4:17
1 Corinthians 6:15	Matt 16:18	Ephesians 5:27
2 Corinthians 11:2	Revelations 19:7	1 Peter 2:17
1 Corinthians 5:1-13	Galatians 6:1-5	Ephesians 2:19
1 Corinthians 10:12	Jeremiah 17:9	1 Timothy 1:19
Acts 20:28-29	1 Peter 5:1-4	Hebrews 13:7
Acts 2:42	2 Corinthians 8:5	

Day 18: Experiencing Life Together

What does the phrase, “fellowship” bring to your mind? (responses and discussion)

Being a member of the Church means so much more than just being an attender. Someone has said, “Sitting on the church pew doesn’t make you a Christian any more than sitting in a hen house makes you a hen.” In order to be a Christian, we have to be a functioning member of the Body. We have to be involved with each other to the extent that we are experiencing life together. We have to be involved in real fellowship.

1 John 1:7 (NLT)

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.

What is genuine fellowship? First of all, it is not something that happens in a crowd of people. In the same way that our bodies are a collection of many groups of small cells, so is the church. It is within these small groups of ten or fewer people that real fellowship takes place.

What happens in real fellowship?

- A trust develops that allows for relationships to become deep and authentic. Within that trust, we feel safe to confess our sins and pray for each other. (James 5:16)
- We need and depend upon each other. We develop the art of giving and receiving.
- Two very basic human needs are met: the need to be understood and the need to have our feelings validated = sympathy.
- We learn to forgive and be forgiven; we learn how to extend grace and mercy and receive grace and mercy.

Verse to remember: Galatians 6:2 (NLT)

Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

There are levels of fellowship.

The simplest levels of fellowship are (1) the *fellowship of sharing*, and (2) the *fellowship of studying* God’s Word together. At a deeper level is the *fellowship of serving*, and the deepest level is the *fellowship of suffering*. (p. 141)

Additional scriptures

Matthew 18:20

1 John 1:7-8

James 5:16

1 Corinthians 12:25

Romans 1:12

Romans 12:10

Romans 14:19

Colossians 3:12

Philippians 3:10

Colossians 3:13

Conclusion

God designed us for love and relationships. The church is the perfect design for meeting our human need for love and belonging. It is in fellowship with other Christians that we develop deep and satisfying relationships that are pleasing to God. It is through fellowship with other Christians that we grow spiritually and develop a support system.

How can true fellowship within the Church help prevent or correct human weakness that result in sin and crimes such as substance abuse?

(responses and discussion)

What other problems can real fellowship prevent or improve? Why?

How? (responses and discussion)

Closing the lesson / class:

Close the lesson with a **prayer**
(suggestion)

“Father, help me to remember that life is all about love. Help me take the time to love the people you place in my path. Remind me that loving others is never a waste of time. Teach me to love those who seem unlovable and give them what they need, not what they deserve. God, whether I get anything else done today, I want to make sure that I spend time loving you and loving other people. Because that’s what life is all about, I don’t want to waste this day.

God, please help me to remember that whenever I become careless about fellowship with other believers, I’m moving away from you. Forgive me for the times I’ve gotten detached from your Body, the church. Help me to stay connected and committed, and love your church the way you do. Father, I want you to use me to help build real fellowship in your church. Help me to be authentic with others and not wear a mask. Teach me to show sympathy to those who are hurting and offer mercy to those who have stumbled.”² Please forgive me for the times I have failed to do this. Thank you for extending your mercy and grace to me. In Jesus name, Amen.

Offer the booklet, "**Am I Saved?**" to any who may want a copy.

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

References:

¹Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

² Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life Prayer Journal, Days 16-18***. Inspirio, 2002.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>
