

**Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry**  
**Teacher's Guide**  
**Series 1: Lesson #8**  
**"You Were Formed For God's Family", Part C**  
(from *The Purpose Driven Life*<sup>1</sup>)

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

**Preparation:**

1. Read the section for Day 19-21 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 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, **do not** 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 do not 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.)

- God wants us to learn to live in harmony and unity with all of His family while on earth in preparation for living that way in heaven.
- Having loving relationships requires commitment.
- Conflicts are a natural part of relationships.
- When conflicts are handled correctly, we grow closer to each other.
- Reconciliation focuses on the relationship while resolution focuses on the problem.
- We must do everything in our power to be peacemakers.
- Nothing on earth is more valuable to God than His Church.

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

## Introduction

As we have discussed in the past two lessons, God designed us for forming relationships – with Him and with each other. He created the Church where we could learn and practice having Godly relationships through something the Bible refers to as fellowship.

**What is fellowship?** (Responses and discussion) Dictionary definition:

1. The condition of sharing similar interests, ideals, or experiences, as by reason of profession, religion, or nationality.
2. The companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms.
3. A close association of friends or equals sharing similar interests.
4. Friendship; comradeship. )

Life in our human family, or in the Church, our spiritual family, is all about relationships and relationships are built through fellowship. As we have already learned, God’s plan is for “life to be all about learning how to love; [He] wants us to value relationships and make the effort to maintain them instead of discarding them whenever there is a rift, a hurt, or a conflict”. Because we have so much trouble with this, a large part of the New Testament is directed at teaching us how to get along with each other so we can have real fellowship and unity within the Church.

We also learned in earlier lessons that this life is a preparation for the next. We must be learning here how to live in harmony and unity with all of God’s family if we are going to be prepared for heaven. While this lesson is directed toward relationships and fellowship within God’s family, the principles certainly apply to our family relationships and friendships outside of the Church family as well.

## Day 19: Cultivating Community

If we instinctively knew how to get along with others, God would not have spent so much of the New Testament teaching us how. Getting along with others does not come naturally to us; we have to learn it. The mother or teacher of young children constantly has to instruct and guide those children in learning behaviors and attitudes that help them “play nice” together instead of the fighting and bickering they naturally do.

**Why is it that getting along with each other seems to be such a challenge for us? Even as adults, why is it so easy to “fight and bicker” and so hard to “play nice”?** (responses and discussion; be sure the conversation brings out the aspects of self-centeredness, selfishness, and pride)

For many of us, fighting and bickering is all we know because that is the way we grew up in our dysfunctional families. Sadly, we may have even grown up in a dysfunctional church family, too. Yes, churches can be dysfunctional! That is not the way God wants it, but because they are made up of people, and people do not always put God first, it does happen. Only God can teach us how to have real and healthy relationships. He does this through the teachings in His Word, through the perfect example set by His Son, and through the Holy Spirit working within us. It is only when we want to and seek to do things God's way that we can have genuine fellowship with one another. Then, and only then, will our relationships within our human families and our church families become healthy and pleasing to God.

**Verse to remember: 1 John 3:16 (GWT)**

*We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers.*

Here are nine things that we need to learn and put into practice in order to develop the kinds of relationships that God desires us to have with our brothers and sisters in Christ: We must . . .

1. be authentic by sharing our true feelings.
2. care about and encourage each other.
3. support and be sympathetic toward one another.
4. extend forgiveness and mercy toward one another.
5. be honest by speaking the truth in love.
6. be humble and admit our own weaknesses.
7. respect our differences by showing courtesy.
8. be trustworthy with confidences.
9. make relationships a priority.

Just as the brothers and sisters in a human family all have peculiar traits and annoying habits, so do our brothers and sisters in God's family, the Church. Fellowship in the church family, however, has nothing to do with compatibility, it is based on our relationship with God – we're His family and He expects us to act like we are. We live in a society that praises independence and self-indulgence. The reason that genuine fellowship is very rare is because most of us are not willing to give up our self-centeredness and independence in order to put others first and to be interdependent.

**Additional Scriptures**

Ephesians 4:3, 15, 25	1 Timothy 3:14-15	Proverbs 24:26
Galatians 6:1-2	Proverbs 28:23	Ecclesiastes 8:6
1 Timothy 5:1-2	1 Corinthians 5:3-12	1 Peter 5:5
Romans 12:16	Philippians 2:3-4	Romans 15:2
Titus 3:2, 10	Romans 12:10	Proverbs 16:28

## Day 20: Restoring Broken Fellowship

One of, if not the most challenging and difficult, things we will do on this earth is building and keeping loving relationships. It is unusual in our society to find couples who have been married for 30, 40, or 50 years or friendships that have lasted for a lifetime. Sadly, it is quite common to find family members at war with one another, neighbors who never speak to each other, and friendships that have turned to hatred. Certainly, the best thing is to live and relate to each other in peace and love as God wants us to, but **what can or should we do about a relationship that is already broken or one that becomes broken?** (provide some examples or ask for some examples of broken relationships as a basis for discussion. **WARNING! Because many inmates have been abused / molested / attacked / etc. make sure that they understand that these principles should be applied with great caution, if at all, to the person/s who have inflicted these crimes upon them. That they can forgive without resolving, particularly if the perpetrator is not a fellow Christian. If the inmate was the perpetrator of such crimes, he/she can and should change and seek forgiveness from God who will grant it, but should not necessarily expect forgiveness from the person/s they harmed particularly if the person/s is not a fellow Christian.**)

God expects us to settle our differences and to do all we can to be peacemakers and relationship builders, most especially with fellow Christians. **1 Corinthians 6:5 (NLT)** *I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these arguments?* And, **1 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT)** *Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.*

**Why would He be particularly concerned about relationships among Christians?** (answer) **John 13:35 (Msg)** *This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples--when they see the love you have for each other.*" For some people, the first or perhaps only Gospel they will be exposed to will not be in the Bible but in the lives of Christians. The way we treat each other speaks volumes – good or bad - to unbelievers about the God that we love and serve.

The following passage emphasizes why it is important that we live in peace with one another and how we are to do that. See how many reasons you can identify for "why" and "how" we are to do this as we read these verses. (**why & how**)

### **Ephesians 4 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for **you have been called by God.** <sup>2</sup>Be **humble and gentle.** Be **patient with**

each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup>Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.

<sup>4</sup>We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. <sup>5</sup>There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all.

<sup>21</sup>Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. <sup>23</sup>Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup>You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness--righteous, holy, and true.

<sup>25</sup>So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other. <sup>26</sup>And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup>for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.

<sup>29</sup>Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

<sup>30</sup>And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

<sup>31</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. <sup>32</sup>Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Because this is so important and because it can also be so difficult, we have to work at becoming good peacemakers, in other words, at becoming like Jesus. Jesus highly commended those who are peacemakers in **Matthew 5:9 (CEV)** "God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!"

**What are some qualities that characterize a peacemaker?** (responses and discussion; lead conversation to the following points:)

Peacemaking does not mean avoiding conflict. Conflict is a natural part of human relationships, so being a peacemaker means that we have no choice except to address conflict. There may even be times when we must create conflict in order bring the problem out in the open to deal with it. By ignoring or running from a problem that needs to be worked out, we are not being peacemakers at all, we are being cowards! By always giving in just to avoid conflict, we are also not being peacemakers, we are being doormats, another form of cowardice.

Jesus was the greatest peacemaker, but on occasion, He created conflict when the only way to correct a situation or get someone's attention to deal with a problem was through conflict. He never ran from conflict. He never backed down. He was never intimidated. He always showed His love for the person/s while at the same time He confronted the problem.

Here are seven biblical steps that we must take to restore fellowship when it has been broken. We must . . .

(1) Pray. Talk to God about the problem before you ever talk to the other person. Many of our conflicts are caused because our hearts are in the wrong place and we do not pray. (**James 4:1-2**) We need to ask God to help us have a loving, self-less attitude before we ever approach anyone about a conflict.

(2) Take the initiative, don't wait for the other person to make the first move. It doesn't matter whose "fault" it is. If there is a problem between Christians, we must personally take responsibility to make the first move to reconcile . (**Matthew 5:23-24; Ephesians 4:26-27**)

In addition to the harm in our relationship with another person, our prayers will be hindered and our relationship with God will be affected if we do not reconcile our conflicts with one another. (**1 Peter 3:7; Proverbs 28:9**)

To be successful in our attempts to reconcile our conflicts, besides acting right away before matters get worse, we should choose the time and place where neither is too tired, rushed, or where we will be interrupted.

(3) Be sympathetic. (**Philippians 2:4**) If we hope for success in our attempts to resolve a problem with another person, we must, first of all, try to understand the other person's feelings. We must genuinely care, and show it, if our peacemaking efforts are going to have a chance of being successful.

Initially, we must focus on feelings, not facts. Allow the other person to talk without making judgments. Begin with sympathy, not solutions! Listen. Be patient. Use wisdom. Really hear what that person's concerns and fears are.

(4) Confess. It takes two people to make a relationship and most of the time, both have had some part in the cause of the conflict. We must be honest with ourselves about our own mistakes and sins, and we must be humble enough to confess them to the person that we have hurt. Confession is a powerful peacemaking tool. It shows humility and removes our own defensiveness. It disarms the other person. It shows genuine intent to mend the relationship. (**Matthew 7:5; 1 John 1:8**)

(5) Choose our words wisely. In peacemaking, *how* we say things is just as important as *what* we say. We must attack the problem without attacking the other person.

We will shut down all communication and hope of peace if we do not destroy our arsenal of relational "nuclear words" which include: condemning,

belittling, comparing, labeling, insulting, condescension, sarcasm, digging up the past, “jokes” at the expense of the other person, and so on. (**Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 16:21; Ephesians 4:29**) We must be thoughtful in choosing the words we use to address the issue while helping to maintain the other person’s worth and dignity.

(6) Cooperate as much as possible. We do not have control over anyone else’s response to conflict except our own, but we must do everything we possible can to “live at peace with everyone”. (**Romans 12:18**) To do this, we must sometimes give up something – something like our pride, our self-centeredness, or our will. We must be willing to compromise and adjust to other’s needs as well as our own. Jesus said it this way, (**Matthew 5:9 MSG**) *You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.*

(7) Focus on reconciliation rather than resolution.

**What is the difference between reconciliation and resolution?** (allow for responses)

In resolution, we are attempting to find a solution to a problem in a way that everyone will agree and/or be happy about it. The focus is on the problem. The problem with resolution, however, is that some things will never be agreed upon by all those concerned. As long as there are people, there will be different points of view about issues. Sometimes there is not a right or a wrong solution; there are just different solutions and those involved cannot agree on which one is the right one or the best one.

Sometimes the best solution is simply to agree to disagree without being disagreeable! In this case, we accept and respect each other’s point of view even though we do not see it the same way. This approach moves toward reconciliation, which focuses on the relationship rather than the problem. When we focus on the relationship, the problem often loses its significance. At the worst, the individuals continue to work cooperatively to try to reach a compromise or an agreement. They become unified in heart and purpose – to maintain their relationship - even if they disagree on the issue. That is what God wants to see!

**Verse to remember: Romans 12:18 (TEV)**

*Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.*

Every relationship involves two people, and even when we have done our best to do it God’s way, the other person may not respond in a loving way. Nevertheless, our efforts allow us to live in peace with God, and who knows but what the other person may eventually be touched and changed by our attitude of reconciliation and peace.

**Additional Scriptures**

2 Corinthians 5:18

Philippians 2:1-2

Romans 15:5

John 13:35

Job 5:2

Job 18:4

Psalms 73:21, 22

Proverbs 19:11

Romans 15:2, 3

Romans 12:10

Philippians 2:3

1 Peter 3:11

Jude 1:22-23

## **Day 21: Experiencing Life Together**

Since the Church is God's family here on earth and the Body that Jesus died for, it is extremely valuable to God. As Christians, God has given us the job to love and protect it by maintaining peace and harmony within it.

### **Ephesians 4:3 (NLT)**

*Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.*

The problem is that we are imperfect humans and we don't naturally know how to do this, so God has given us some instructions. He wants us to . . .

(1) Focus on what we have in common, not on our differences.

#### **Verse to remember: Romans 14:19 (PH)**

*Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together.*

### **1 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT)**

*Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.*

(2) Be realistic in our expectations, after all, the church is made up of humans and we are far from perfect. We sin whether we intend to or not. We must avoid being idealistic about our expectations for the church. If the church were made up of perfect people, there would be no one in it! So God instructs us to be loving and patient with each other rather than faultfinding.

### **Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)**

*Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

(3) Choose to encourage rather than criticize. **Romans 14:19 (MSG)**

<sup>19</sup>So let's agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other. Help others with encouraging words; <sup>20</sup>don't drag them down by finding fault.

(4) Refuse to participate in gossip. **Galatians 5:15 (AMP)** *But if you bite and devour one another, be careful that you [and your whole fellowship] are not consumed by one another.*

(5) Practice God's method for conflict resolution.

**Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup>*If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.*

<sup>16</sup>*But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.*

(6) Support the church leaders.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (NLT)**

<sup>12</sup>*Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong.*

<sup>13</sup>*Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other.*

**Additional scriptures**

John 17:20-23

Romans 10:12

Romans 12:4,5

1 Corinthians 1:10

1 Corinthians 8:6

1 Corinthians 12:13

Ephesians 5:5

Philippians 2:2

Romans 14:1, 13

2 Timothy 2:23-26

Ephesians 4:29

Matthew 5:9

James 5:9

Romans 14:4,10

Revelation 12:10

Proverbs 17:4

Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 26:20

Proverbs 25:9

Proverbs 20:19

Proverbs 17:4

Jude 1:19

1 Corinthians 5:5

Hebrews 13:17

2 Timothy 2:14

Philippians 4:2

Titus 2:15

Titus 3:2

1 Corinthians 10:24

## Conclusion

We best fulfill our second purpose – loving God and loving each other – in the Church. Being called a child of God is an honor and a privilege that no one can earn. It is a free gift through the blood of Christ and the grace of God. When we choose to accept this gift, we are “born again” into God’s family, and we become brothers and sisters of Christ and of each other as His children. Within this family, God has given us the responsibility and duty to help make it what He wants it to be – a safe and secure place where we have caring and loving relationships with each other, grow to be more like Jesus, and bring glory to Him, our Father. The church as God intends it is all about relationships, and only when we choose to follow God’s plan for fellowship will the plan for His church be fulfilled. When it does happen, it is a beautiful thing and God smiles!

## Closing the lesson / class:

Close the lesson with a **prayer**

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.

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### References:

<sup>1</sup>Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Warren, Rick. ***The Purpose Driven Life Prayer Journal, Days 19-21***. Inspirio, 2002.

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

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