

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 14: Love One Another (6c)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **1 Corinthians 13:4-5a**
4 "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude".

Step 3: *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – 1 Corinthians 13*

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Consider when a believer actually enters the Body of Christ / the Church.
2. Christ's Redeemed Community is to be a healthy body of people who even though broken have died to themselves and are in complete submission to Christ.
3. Why is unity in the Christian Church essential?
4. The author says that disunity in the Body is the result of the sin of pride (jealousy).
5. Do you understand that the benefits of community for a disciple are so great that it is almost impossible to survive without it?

Step 5: *Read and discuss the Content from the book:*

Chapter 6c per the author – Keith Phillips:

Community Is Your Link With Other Believers

How can a disciple obey Christ's command to "love one another" without others who can be the object of his love? No Christian can be healthy without other Christians. That is why every believer immediately enters the body upon conversion. "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.... For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..." (1 Corinthians 12:27,13, italics added).

Positionally, every Christian is a member of Christ's redeemed community. The Bible never addresses the possibility of position without function. Attempting to live the Christian life without a practical relationship to the body is risky speculation at best. Consequently, it is a top priority for every disciple to belong to a healthy, functioning Christian body.

A healthy Christian body is characterized by unity. It is composed of disciples who have died to themselves and are in complete submission to Christ. They rest in the knowledge that He "has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Corinthians 12:18 NIV).

The book of Acts documents the centrality of unity in the Christian Church. Early believers were a closely knit family. When Peter preached at Pentecost, the other apostles stood with him (Acts 2:14). First-century disciples learned, ate, fellowshiped and prayed together (Acts 2:42). They "had all things in common" (Acts 2:44).

No part of a healthy body can act independently. My daily jogging would be greatly impaired if my legs refused to cooperate with each other. If my right leg insisted on going forward while my left leg went backward, I would fall flat on my face.

The words and actions of each member of Christ's body must promote unity among believers. Unity is developed through fellowship; regular, honest communication; and freely giving and receiving forgiveness. A disciple is committed to sacrificing his own good for the welfare of the body because he knows that unity will bring glory to God.

Unity is both the purpose and the fruit of community. At World Impact we prepare in groups, team-teach, work, live and relax together. This strengthens our unity and enhances our Christian growth and ministry. Our students and neighbors learn much more about Christian love by watching how we relate to each other than they do by hearing what we say. The world understands God's love through our unity (John 17:21-23).

Most disunity within the body is grounded in pride. We begin to demand our rights and guard our time, forgetting that we exchanged these for peace with God when we met Christ at the cross. We seek to receive the praise of men, rather than to bring glory to God through all that we do. Jesus condemned the Pharisees "for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God" (John 12:43). Pride is a denial of self-death and has no place among God's people.

A dangerous form of pride is jealousy. Jealousy cripples a body which must have cooperation among all its members in order to effectively serve God. James 3:16 warns, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."

I understand how jealousy could creep into a Christian body. Even this book could cause division. You see, while I am the author, I have benefited greatly from the suggestions of our directors and a few other leaders. Then five of our Los Angeles staff helped me edit it. Another four people labored selflessly in typing the manuscripts.

Any one of these contributors could say, "Look at all the work I put into that, and no one will ever know. Keith gets all the credit." Jealousy. But because these disciples know that God, not Keith, receives all the glory, jealousy is averted. God uses people broken in spirit, with humble hearts, uninterested in personal accolades, glorying only in the cross of Christ. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1 KJV).

A functioning Christian body seeks to stimulate maturity in all its members. Since the body is no stronger than its weakest part, its health depends on the well-being of each member. Romans 12:5 says, "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." The relationship among the members of the body is so intimate that what affects one, affects all.

Once I went sailing with a friend in a small boat. When we returned, he asked me to keep the boat from ramming the pier by tying the boat to a metal cleat on the dock. Barefooted and eager to please, I jumped out of the boat, rope in hand. Unfortunately, my big toe tried to uproot that solidly secured cleat—but the cleat did not budge. My toe throbbed with pain. I dropped the rope and the boat crashed into the dock.

Immediately, every organ, limb and faculty of my body focused its undivided attention on the plight of my toe. My stomach was no longer concerned about lunch. My mouth did not chastise my toe for being clumsy. My hand was no longer anxious to secure the rope. My head did not care about the damage to the boat. Every part of my body was unashamedly concerned about the welfare of my toe. When my toe ached, my entire body hurt.

So it is in Christ's body. We are in such close fellowship that when one member hurts, we all hurt; when one part rejoices, we all rejoice (Romans 12:15).

A hurting Christian cannot withhold his struggles from the community. His burdens, heartaches and concerns are immediately relayed through the body to the Head, which coordinates an appropriate response. The body promotes health by channeling every weakness and hurt into its own bloodstream for purification through forgiveness and healing. Only a sick body lacks this intimacy.

Members of a mature body have graduated from the incomplete idea of "going to church" to the biblical teaching that they are the Church. In Christ, disciples "are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22 NIV). No longer restrained by bricks and mortar, the Church functions at full force in the business world, at school and in the neighborhood. Worship ceases to be confined to Sunday morning. Every action, word and thought is offered as worship to God.

The benefits of community for a disciple are so great that it is almost impossible to survive without it. Where else can a disciple be in submission to godly men who know him well? Where else can he be nurtured and lovingly held accountable for his Christian growth and maturity? Where else can he become like Christ by observing the lives of others? Where else can he experience sweet and pure fellowship? Where else can he be so secure in his neighbor's love that he is liberated to love others even as God loves him? Where else can he belong to a chorus that with one voice sings a continuous anthem of praise and worship to the Creator? Where else can his witness to the world be so bright? Where else can he be a disciple?

pp. 67-71

Disciples' Checklist – Love One Another
☐ My love for other Christians is conspicuous.
☐ I have accepted God's forgiveness for my past, present and future.
☐ I have forgiven myself, based on God's forgiveness of me.
☐ I forgive others readily.
☐ I accept the forgiveness of others.
☐ I am part of a healthy, functioning Christian community.

Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Philips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

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