

Construction in Progress: Building Relationships

Introduction:

- What is a relationship?
 - A relationship is described as the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.
 - What are some ways that we form or build relationships? _____
- In Matthew 12:22-48, Jesus heals a man of demon possession and instead of recognizing this healing as a miracle, scribes and Pharisees try to claim that Jesus does so by the power of the devil. In response to the blasphemy and attempted division by the Pharisees, Jesus' sermon comes to a penultimate statement in verses 48-50.
 - "And He stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:49-50)
 - Just as Christ called those that follow Him his family, we are called to fortify our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ above all others.

Where We Start:

- The term used most frequently in the Bible to refer to Christians is the word "brother". The Bible also refers to God as our "Father" and us as His "children" too many times to count. These terms point to the fact that as Christians we are a family and belong to the Household of God (1 Timothy 3:15).
 - Since we are a family in Christ, there is an exclusivity to our group. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. How are Christians described in this passage? _____
 - As Christians we are called to be different from those around us, and doing so allows others to see the difference Jesus has on our lives.
 - The relationship we have with each other is granted through Christ. It is by the grace of God that we have been made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5), and it is only by this bond that we can be counted as a part of God's family.
 - Though many people around us may bear a "family resemblance" by performing good deeds, being righteous, or even claiming fellowship with God, they have not truly submitted to Him unless they do what he has told us to do (Luke 6:46).
 - Read Matthew 7:21. What people will enter the kingdom of heaven? _____
- True submission to Christ means we access His grace in the way He commands: by faith that leads to baptism (Mark 16:16).
 - Through baptism we are saved (1 Peter 3:21), connected to Christ (Galatians 3:27), and given access to the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
 - Baptism is not where our relationship with Christ ends, but it is the point where it begins, and there must be proper purpose behind it.
 - Read Acts 19:1-5. Why had the people in Ephesus not received the Holy Spirit?

- The connection we share with our brothers and sisters in Christ is unique and unlike any other fellowship in our lives, and must be prioritized.

How We Grow:

- Even though we are all part of the family of Christ and grow together in the same knowledge of Him, as believers we sometimes apply the knowledge we have learned together and the standards we hold for ourselves differently.
 - The key in dealing with these differences is understanding the difference between a firmly held, Bible-backed opinion, and an actual edict (command) from God.
 - We know for a fact that immodesty is a sin (1 Timothy 2:9), but two godly people can agree on the statement but disagree where that line is drawn.
 - We must make sure that what we hold to biblical authority in these instances, and not try to make our word more important than God's law (Matthew 15:7-9).
 - Does this mean that we should never offer constructive criticism or advice to brothers and sisters in Christ? _____
 - In what ways should we go to our family in Christ if we do disagree with them? _____
 - Read Ephesians 4: 31-32. Why do you think we are called to treat each other in the ways mentioned in this passage? _____
 - Much like teaching a child not to touch a hot stove, or allowing a child to fail a task, we must be careful and loving in the way that we approach our family in Christ in these differences, and give them freedom to learn.
 - By doing so with love, we also allow opportunity for us to potentially learn from them as well in the future.

The “Finished” Product:

- No matter what differences or similarities we have with our family in Christ, we are united in one thing; the edification of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:26). If we commit to this purpose, then will be able to co-exist and grow together, even if that means not getting our way 100 percent of the time.
 - Just as we are called different parts of the body of Christ and called to different roles in His church, so we must accept, that despite our differences, we are tied together.
 - By loving one another and uniting ourselves in Christ, we are able to grow in Christ.
 - Read Ephesians 4:15-16. By working together as different parts of the body of Christ, what are we able to accomplish? _____
 - The relationships we build not only allow us to grow in Christ, but allow us to bring others to him as well.