



Serving the Church Family

(Romans 12:3–16)

After God created all things, He said it was very good (Gen 1:31). However, looking at the man that He had made, the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18). Therefore, He made a woman for Adam to be his wife. God said, “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen 1:28) It was not long, and they heard the pitter

patter of little feet, and the joy of a family was experienced.

It is not good to be alone. Let that sink in. In Psalm 68:6, “God sets the lonely in families.” However, in this life there are many lonely people. There are some who have been orphaned, or never married, or married and widowed or divorced. Perhaps, they have moved to a new neighborhood and do not have a friend. Perhaps they are lonely in a crowd, a young mother with little kids alone at home while her husband is away at work.

Some who are alone, steel themselves, and true to the lyrics of the old Simon and Garfunkel song of the 1960s say, “I am a rock. I am an island.” Listen to the haunting words.

A winters day
In a deep and dark December;
I am alone,
Gazing from my window to the streets below
On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow.

I am a rock,
I am an island.

I've built walls,
A fortress deep and mighty,
That none may penetrate.
I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.

I am a rock,
I am an island.

Don't talk of love,
But I've heard the words before;
It's sleeping in my memory.
I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died.
If I never loved I never would have cried.

I am a rock,
I am an island.

I have my books
And my poetry to protect me;
I am shielded in my armor,
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb.
I touch no one and no one touches me.

Sermon handout: Bible Baptist Church of Galway, Galway, NY, Pastor Wayne R. Brandow, Sept 13, 2020

I am a rock,
I am an island.

And a rock feels no pain;
And an island never cries.

Paul Simon, who wrote these lyrics, has masterfully captured the pain of rejection and loneliness. This is truly a emotionally powerful song!

What does God have to say to such hurt and pain? “It is not good for the man to be alone.” “God sets the lonely in families.”

What has God done to address such hurt and pain? He came to set the solitary in families. His family.

It is a Divine family. The Trinity. It is a family with God the Father as our Father, the Son of God as our brother, and the Holy Spirit. It is a family characterized by love, and felicity, abounding in goodness. How do we fit in? We become adopted children when we receive Christ by faith, and our fellow church members become our brothers and sisters. There is no need to be alone any longer. This is to be a family of love and grace, and acceptance and encouragement,

There is even another picture of intimacy and love. In the Old Testament Abraham sent his servant to a far country to get a bride for his son, Isaac. This portrays another picture of our inclusion into the family of God. God the Father sent the Holy Spirit into the world to get a bride for His Son. We are that bride, and Jesus is the happy groom who delights in us and will take us home to His family, a place of happiness and bliss.

God’s plan for the believer is to bring him or her into His family, and the church is the earthly representation of that reality. Today, in our study of Romans 12:3–16, we are going to speak about the joy that comes in being a part of and sharing in that family life.

Ways to Serve in the Church Family

Table 1. Romans 12:3–8

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.</p> | <p>Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought</p> <p>We have one body with many parts (eyes, ears, legs, etc.) Different parts, different functions</p> <p>In Christ, the church is one body Different parts, different functions</p> <p>Examples of different gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prophesying (preaching)• Serving• Teaching• Encouraging• Giving / generously• Leadership / govern diligently• Showing mercy / cheerfully |
|--|--|

- Notice, we are all different and our differences are God given.
- Everyone is gifted in some way. The gift was given to serve others.

- Notice, the focus here is not the benefits you receive from the church family, i.e. what you will get. But how to serve, how you can participate in the church family.

[practical hint – with respect to our own families]

- Parents love their kids. They want to give them the best life ever, as a result Mom and Dad serve the kids. They are constantly doing for them. However, children will never really be happy until they feel a part of the family and a part of making it a success. They need to know the joy of serving others and there is no better place to learn than in the home.
- Home should be a place of teamwork, loyalty, mutual watching over each other, mutual love.
- Families that have that are peaceful, a haven, full of joy.
- What is the opposite? You know it – what characterizes a “spoiled child”? miserable, unhappy, whinny, angry. Why are they that way? You know it – they want their own way, they want it now, think only about themselves THEY HAVE NEVER LEARNED WHAT IT IS TO BE PART OF A TEAM AND WATCHING OUT FOR OTHERS.

Think about our passage – “³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.” If your child is the center of attention, they will get the message. It is all about me!

Kids that are taught to step in, help, and pitch in, will naturally do that when they grow up. Dishes need to be done. They pick up a towel to dry. When they are older, and a dinner guest, they pick up a dish towel to dry. They feel at ease to help because they learned it at home. The only way you get to that place with your kids is that they must discover how enjoyable it is to help and serve others. Part of it is caught. They see the example of thoughtful parents. Part of it is enforced. “Listen, I want you to help pick up and wash the dishes.”

In our text, the believer sees his church family and asks, what can I do. Who needs encouragement? Who in the family is being left out?

How to Serve in the Church Family

Table 2. Romans 12:9–16

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.</p> <p>¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.</p> | <p>How to serve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love sincerely • Hate evil • Cling to good • Be loyal • Honor others above yourself • Do not be a slacker • Serve the Lord • Be joyful – because you are hopeful • Be patient –when things are bad • Be faithful to pray • Share with those in need • Be hospitable • Bless those who persecute you • Rejoice with those rejoicing • Mourn with those mourning • Live in harmony with your brothers & sisters • Do not be proud, associate with the lowly • Do not be conceited |
|--|--|

Lessons

- **Love must be sincere** (Rom 12:9) Do not pretend to love others, love them! How do you do that?

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

Table 3. Love’s checklist – from 1 Corinthians 13:4–8

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Patient | Am I patient in this action, attitude, thought? |
| Kind | Am I being kind? |
| Does not envy | Am I jealous of what they have become or what they have? |
| Does not boast | Am I tooting my own horn? Hey, look at me, aren't I great? |
| Is not proud | Do I feel I am superior, better than him or her, or them? |
| Is no rude | Am I crass, crude, vulgar, disrespectful? |
| Is not self-seeking | Am I only thinking about my interests? |
| Is not easily angered | Do I have explosive anger? |
| Keeps no record of wrongs | Am I bitter? Have I forgiven him, her, or them for what they did? |
| Does not delight in evil | Am I thinking of revenge, how I can make them suffer? |
| Rejoices in the truth | God is true one, am I desirous of walking in His ways? |
| Always protects | Am I concerned about his, her, or their wellbeing? |
| Always trusts | Am I giving them the benefit of the doubt, and trusting God? |
| Always perseveres | Am I about to give up on him, her, or them? |
| Never fails | Am I looking for the good and for the best in him, her, or them? |

Love is first doing the right thing. Once you do the right thing – feelings often follow. Are you having a hard time loving someone? Check what you need to work on. We are all sinners. Confess it to God.

1 John 1:8-9 ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

God will forgive you. Pick one thing to work on. Ask God for help in what to do and how to do it. (This is what prayer is all about!)

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 4:2 You do not have, because you do not ask God.

You cannot change on your own. You need God’s help.

- **Hate what is evil; cling to what is good** (Rom 12:9). It is okay to hate some things – Injustice, violence, destruction or theft of property, lies, drunkenness, unfaithfulness!
- **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves** (Rom 12:10)
Think about others
- **Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.** (Rom 12:11)
This has to do with your work. Do your work to please God.
- **Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer** (Rom 12:12)
This has to do when things become hopeless and painful

- **Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality** (Rom 12:13)
This has to do with helping others
- **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.** (Rom 12:14–16)
This has to do with attitudes. How to handle an enemy. Sympathize with people, etc.

Bringing It All Together

What is it that Paul is trying to get across? You and I have a special gift to be used in the Church, that is, the Church family. We all are different with different gifts. As we use our gifts we must use them in love, thinking about how we can help others.

Unfortunately, we can easily miss the mark of what God wants us to do. I have seen people come into our church, gifted people, whose gifts enhanced the church. Perhaps they are outgoing, cheerful, engage in conversation with others, true extraverts, whose presence brings life into the church. All is going great, when suddenly, they look around and say, “Why aren’t people in this church like me? This is a dead church. They have got to get out of their shell,” and the one who was a blessing becomes a problem.

The Lord in this passage is stressing that we are different. We need to accept people with their differences. We need to love others. God likes variety! It is okay to be different!

Our gifts and strengths can be a problem when we pridefully want to display them, rather than think about others and use our gifts to help them. Love for others must be the basis for using our gifts. Do you do, what you do, to be seen of men and applauded or is that the farthest thing from your thoughts? You just want to help. Face it, pride is a real problem with all of us, especially with those who teach. And I am thinking about myself. Do I always have to give the final word? Am I allowing others to share what they know? Am I listening to others or looking for an opening to share my “wonderful” (and I am speaking tongue in cheek) – my “wonderful” knowledge? This passage is very convicting but needed to keep us on the right course.

The Church Family as God’s Family

Jesus gave us a 9*glimpse of family life in heaven in John 17 in His prayer to His heavenly Father. He talks about the glory that was His with the Father as the Son of God before He came into the world. Between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their existence was and continues to be a world of love and happiness. We have a good God. Goodness must be expressed. God’s goodness has overflowed from heaven into this world. How is that?

God saw our sin and misery. The soul that sins; it shall die. We are all heading towards death; but our Triune God, because of His love, His goodness, and mercy had a plan. God the Father sent the Son of God into the world to rescue us. He became clothed in flesh. He became a man, the man Jesus. The angels heralded His birth as He came into the world (that is Christmas) He died in our place on the cross and rose from the dead (that is Easter), that all those who believe in Him should not perish but have LIFE! He sent the Holy Spirit into the world that we might see and understand what Jesus Christ did for us, so that we might believe. He has not only saved us; but adopted all those who believe in Him into His family and He gathers them into His church. Why? It was out of the goodness of His heart! God wants us to share in His happiness and joy. His home, heaven, is a heaven of love, and He wants us to get a foretaste of it here on earth before He calls us home. He has His work cut out for Him, as we are all sinners and selfish by nature. However, since it is God who is at work within us, we will all become overcomers. As time goes on, we all become more loving like God.

Do you know Christ as your Savior?

^{KJV} **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*