

## **“Care For Each Other Through Fellowship”**

**1/13/08 \* Ephesians 2:11-22**

*We are members of God’s family, dedicated to the teachings of Jesus, and committed to seeking God’s will. In our church, we glorify God through worship, reach others through evangelism, assist our community through service, **care for each other through fellowship**, and equip our members through Biblical instruction.  
(Grace Baptist’s Mission Statement)*

*I. Imagine a world without the church...*

*II. What does the doctrine of the Trinity have to do with my longing for a family?*

*III. Seven Reasons Why I Need To Belong To A Local Church Family:*

**1. The Church helps my love for \_\_\_\_\_ grow through \_\_\_\_\_.**

a. What’s the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?

c. Is growing in love easy? (What problem is discussed in Ephesians 2?)

**2. The Church helps my \_\_\_\_\_ to God grow through \_\_\_\_\_.**

a. What’s the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How does God want to use us as his sidekicks?

c. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?

**3. The Church helps my \_\_\_\_\_ of God grow through \_\_\_\_\_.**

a. What’s the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?

**B = \_\_\_\_\_ is strengthened.**

**I = \_\_\_\_\_ is modeled.**

**B = \_\_\_\_\_ is maintained.**

**L = \_\_\_\_\_ is deepened.**

**E = \_\_\_\_\_ is received.**

**4. The Church helps my love for \_\_\_\_\_ people grow through \_\_\_\_\_.**

a. What’s the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

**5. The Church helps my \_\_\_\_\_ for God grow through \_\_\_\_\_.**

a. What’s the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?  
Can’t I just worship God on my own?

**6. Being a member of a local church has positive \_\_\_\_\_ benefits!**

a. Like what?

b. What might account for these findings?

**7. Being an active member of a local church brings \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.**

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*We are members of God's family, dedicated to the teachings of Jesus, and committed to seeking God's will. In our church, we glorify God through worship, reach others through evangelism, assist our community through service, care for each other through fellowship, and equip our members through Biblical instruction.*  
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I. *Imagine a world without the church...*

What difference do you think that would make? Maybe day to day, it wouldn't be missed at all. Some might even say, “Good riddance,” in light of all the recent scandals shaking some denominations. But I'd be willing to bet that if you'd erase the church from society, that you'd find in the end, a lot more hurt, a lot more emptiness, a lot more darkness than before.

II. *What does the doctrine of the Trinity have to do with my longing for a family?*

God is a triune being. Meaning within his very nature, God is relational. Therefore, we who were created in his image are also relational. We were made to be part of a family. And this is why God brought into existence a beautiful family called “the church”.

III. *Seven Reasons Why I Need To Belong To A Local Church Family:*

1. **The Church helps my love for people grow through fellowship.**

a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? **brotherhood**

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?

Love by its very definition requires another person. You can't love others when you're by yourself. You might feel warm fuzzies for someone else on your own, love isn't primarily a feeling, it's an action, it's something you do. The church is what we might call a laboratory of love. It's where love can be worked on, experimented with. It's where we get adjusted, sanded down, worked over.

c. Is growing in love easy? (What problem is discussed in Ephesians 2?)

By nature we are prideful, self-centered, sin-riddled creatures. And becoming a Christian does not automatically change this overnight. In our Scripture reading, Paul was discussing how because of Jesus' death on the cross, God was bringing Jew and Gentile together as one in the church. Verse 14 – “For Jesus himself is our peace, who has made the two one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...” (then verse 16) “...and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross by which he put to death their hostility.” Racism is arguably one of the ugliest features of being a prideful, self-centered, sin-riddled creature. It's good to remind ourselves of this as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday approaches. Yet even this can be overcome by the power of Jesus Christ. Easy? No. Just look at most churches today. So few seem to demonstrate the racial reconciliation this passage is talking about. Possible? yes. And we must keep striving for it.

2. **The Church helps my service to God grow through ministry.**

a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? **Body**

b. How does God want to use us as his sidekicks?

If the human race had never fallen into sin, if we had remained faithful to God from the very beginning, God still would have shared labor with us. He told Adam and Eve before they sinned that they were to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Adam and Eve were in effect to continue God's work of creation. I have no doubt in my mind that even if we hadn't fallen from God, we still would have built cities, composed music, discovered electricity, sailed the oceans and flown into outer space.

Now that God is hard at work rescuing the earth from its sin, bringing it back into fellowship with him, it doesn't surprise me at all that God wants us to share in that great work with him.

c. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?  
**The church is my training ground for ministry. You don't go off to seminary to get trained for ministry. You're being trained for ministry right now. Seminary exists to fine tune what you've already started learning. But the learning begins now.**

**3. The Church helps my knowledge of God grow through teaching.**

a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? **Building**

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?

**B = Belief is strengthened.**

**I = Integrity is modeled.**

**B = Balance is maintained.**

**L = Learning is deepened.**

**E = Encouragement is received.**

**4. The Church helps my love for lost people grow through evangelism.**

a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? **Army (Battalion)**

**The church is an army of soldiers fighting to rescue people from their captivity to sin, to Satan and to this corrupt world. Christ left the church on the earth for the precise purpose of reaching this lost world. The local church is the seedbed for evangelism and mission.**

**5. The Church helps my love for God grow through worship**

a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church? **Bride**

b. How can belonging to a church family help me with this?  
Can't I just worship God on my own?

**Of course, but worshipping our Lord together has a way of reminding me of how big God is. Maybe this Christian over here is gripped with an awesome realization of how holy God is, and how great he is, and who am I that I can possibly approach Him.**

**But over here is a person who was lost in sin until Jesus came to rescue them. And they're so thankful, that God would stoop to their need. And they're blown away by how close God has come, to be their friend and Savior. Which God is the true God? Is God faraway, or close? They're both reflections of God's true nature. And in our worship, we need to contemplate the full dimensionality of God's love for us. Paul says in Ephesians 3:17 – "I pray that you may have power, together with the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." Only people connected and committed to the local church, worshipping together will experience such a thing.**

**6. Being a member of a local church has positive health benefits!**

a. Like what?

**A recent study commissioned by the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society examined the relationship between religion and academics in nearly 10,000 students. One finding of the study was that more church attendance helps kids to improve academically (*Christianity Today*; May 21, 2002; p.60).**

**Other studies have concluded:**

- **regular church attenders live longer**
- **when hospital patients are prayed for they recover more quickly**
- **religious people are less likely to abuse alcohol or drugs**
- **prison inmates who make a religious commitment are less likely than their counterparts to return to jail**
- **marital satisfaction and overall well-being tend to increase with church attendance (*Christianity Today*, "Health and the God-Factor"; Oct.7, 1991, p.88)**

b. What might account for these findings?

**The power of community. Or the 'power of nagging'. Or could it be the power of God?**

7. Being an active member of a local church brings accountability, ownership, and protection.