**RELATIONSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

Sunday School Lesson 20

*Building Right Relationships*

Matthew 12:49-50

7/30/2023

**Introduction:** We looked at the third lesson on our relationship with critics last week. In that lesson, we had several Biblical principles that we were given to consider. Before moving on to today’s lesson, let’s reflect on what those principles are. 1. We must remember that the members of the church are our family. For a local church to thrive, it’s critical for the members of that church to understand the familial relationship that they ought to have with one another. 2. We must understand that love is the primary necessity in the church. This isn’t turning a blind eye toward open sinfulness, but it is also not being critical trying to search out faults in our brothers and sisters in Christ. 3. We must be willing to be open with others in the church. We need to overcome our pride issue and be willing to follow the Biblical pattern for addressing our faults. 4. We should cultivate a servant’s relationship with others in the church. Having a servant’s heart will help to keep us humble about ourselves and thoughtful about others. 5. We should be willing to spend time together with others in the church. You should consider whether you enjoy being around your church family. For our final lesson in this series, we are going to look once again at some general principles on maintaining our relationship within the church.

1. **WE MUST STAND WITH OUR CHURCH FAMILY, NOT AGAINST THEM.**

* Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. I Corinthians 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: As a church, we need to be reminded who our enemy is. Our enemy is not other brothers and sisters in the church. They are our spiritual flesh and blood. Our enemy is Satan, this dark world, and spiritual wickedness. We cannot be effective as a church against the real enemy if we are fighting against ourselves. Imagine a basketball team going to play another team. Two teammates cannot get along and begin fighting because one claims to be a better shooter than the other. How silly is that? They have to be working together as a team if they are going to win. The same is true in the church. We are all on the same team. Why would we fight against ourselves. All the members in the church must be in one accord if the church is going to move forward for the cause of Christ. When we do something to harm another brother or sister in Christ, not only do we harm them, but we also harm Christ. We must put aside the bitterness, anger, and gossip about each other and focus on the common enemy. Just like a house divided against itself cannot stand, a church divided against itself also cannot stand. We must put aside our selfishness and pride and stand together as a church family for the cause of Christ.

1. **WE SHOULD NEGLECT TIME SPENT WITH THOSE IN THE CHURCH.**

* Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. II Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. One of the things that has been undervalued in our churches especially in the digital age we live in is the importance of fellowship. Not only has it begun to drift from our homes, but it also has begun to drift from our churches. For a church to be strong, the members have to spend time with one another. What kind of relationship would we have with our wives if we all we did was say “Hi” once a day? We never spent time talking to each other, we never did any activities together, and we never went on dates together. Needless to say, we would not have a very good relationship. How can expect to have a strong church if its members don’t spend any time together. We have to fellowship with each other. We are commanded in the Bible not to be close with or have fellowship with those who are unbelievers. That means we need to become good friends with believers and those in the church. Despite our differences, we have commonalities that are much stronger than those differences. We have salvation. We have a desire to serve the Lord. We want to see the church grow. We should have enough common ground to build friendships and fellowships with other believers in the church.

1. **WE SHOULD WORK ON BECOMING A BETTER BROTHER TO THE BRETHREN.**

* I Thessalonians 4:10b but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Romans 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. How can we work on becoming a better brother to the brethren and a better member in the church? We do that by becoming a better Christian personally. We do this not only by being faithful to church, but also by having the right relationship with our Heavenly Father. We must work on our alone-time with God through prayer and reading and studying His Word. Just like in the home, we want to be a better husband to our wife, a better wife to our husband, and better parents to our children. In order to be better in these areas, we have to work on ourselves. In order to be a better member in the church, we must work on being a better Christian. As we work on becoming better Christians, we can be what we ought to be for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can be better brothers in Christ by doing what we can for them. We can pray for them. We can encourage them. You might say, “Well, I feel discouraged.” Go encourage someone else and you will be encouraged. Your helping someone else will help you just as much as it helps them. To be a better brother to the brethren, we must also make sure that we are not doing anything that could be a stumblingblock to someone else. You do not want to be the reason other Christians fall. Something that may not be you may not struggle with maybe something with which they do struggle. Make sure that you are doing what you can to encourage other Christians and point them to Christ.

1. **WE MUST ALWAYS TREAT OTHERS IN THE CHURCH WELL.**

* Matthew 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. Philippians 2:1-2 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. I Peter 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Because we are human, people are going to do wrong to us. It can even be a brother in Christ at times. However, it is how we handle the wrongdoing that matters. It should not be that whenever another Christian wrongs us that we have to go and tell the whole church, post it on social media, or try to tear them down in some way. The wrongdoing should be handled properly and should be done with a heart of forgiveness. Do not forget about Who forgave you for *all* the wrongdoings you have ever done. We must resolve the issue or bitterness and strife will begin to grow not only in the heart of the Christian but also in the heart of the church. We must have a spirit of forgiveness and love if we are all going to be of one mind in the church. Church people ought to be treated better than anyone else you know. You ought to uplift them and try to do things for them. They are your spiritual family. If someone in the church has a need, there should be church members fighting to be the first to meet that need. Church members ought to always be treating each other with honor, dignity, and respect. There is much for the church to accomplish for Christ. It needs each and every member to work together with one accord to accomplish that goal.