

### The Life: Sharing Life Together (I John 2:6-11)

Many current studies (even before Covid-19) point to a crisis of loneliness in our country. Some even use the word "epidemic". Many theories exist as to why this is so - increasingly virtual, but not personal connections; the primacy of the individual superseding that of the family or community; and others. Why are personal connections, family and community relations so important! "It is not good for man to be alone!" To state it more positively, we were made to share life together, and to do so in a forever family - in the forever family of God the Father, Son, and Spirit and in the forever family of those who share in His Life. There is really no talk of one in the New Testament without the other. Jesus reveals Himself as coming from God for the sake of the family, the community. To walk as He walked will be about faithfully loving one another into being. We know by now that to walk by faith rules our self-determination - "not I, but Christ." To walk in love excludes self-interest as the primary motive force - "not I, but You". We also know "not I, but Christ" is going "low" before God. "Not I, but you" is going low before one another. One of the tests of fellowship is not "How high can we fly?", but rather, "How low will we go?"

Christianity means family, community, sharing life together. We are called to be and do "church" by relational connections, not organizational charts. Getting along with God and with one another go hand in hand. By no means, then, is fellowship in the Christian family some Edenic ideal. Instead, it is a Divine reality. Actually, it is more real than we realize, more real than many of us care to participate in! That's why too many prefer to love their own dreams and fantasies of the church... and also why too many come to resent the reality. It's amazing how many people I've met in the last 40 plus years of ministry who seem to have the gift of "seismology" -you know, the gift of fault-finding! That "gift" is conferred by the devil himself, upon those clinging to their dreams of the ideal church, those worshipping their fantasies of a church that exists to secure all their wants and desires. Sharing life together will never become our experience as long as we pursue and nurture our own individual illusions and wishes.

Sharing life together as God's family will only take place in and under the Word of God Himself. In Him we no longer belong to ourselves. Under Him (His authority) we no longer live unto ourselves. If He is the Way, the Truth, the Life concerning fellowship as God means it to be, then He is also the judgment upon every other way, truth, and life. To live together as a family, we must learn by faith to walk in step with Him. The idea that I can say, "I walk in step with the Word of God," yet not love God's family (with God's love) is ludicrous! It is incongruent with the character of The One Who demonstrated He is Life for others. If we have a settled fellowship or oneness with God in Christ, we are directed to settle our fellowship or oneness with one another. (Eph 4:3; Phil 2:1-5; II Cor 13:11; Ps 133:1)

Lest we think this is just about settling our loneliness issues or having a pleasant time at "church", do not forget our living fellowship in the family of God is also for the sake of the world. (Jo 20:21; 13:34-35) the church doesn't exist for itself. It is Christ's Body... for the world's sake! We - the Body of Christ - are God's sacrament to the world. We are the means by which He proclaims and conveys His loving and sacrificial Life for others. Our community, our family, our fellowship is SACRAMENTAL!

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# Greetings

I ran across a fascinating article in the Wall Street Journal recently. Authored by a psychoanalyst, she was addressing the issue of "why depression and anxiety are so common among children and adolescents." She said it was due to "a declining interest in religion." She cited a Harvard study (2018) that revealed "teens who reported attending (religious services) scored higher on psychological well being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness." She went on to say that the rejection of all moral and religious principles is "fertilizer for anxiety and depression." Without them, far too many children miss out on "the building blocks of strong character"... and they are also protective against depression, anxiety and the lack of gratitude and empathy. Finally, she stated that any culture that "idealizes materialism, selfishness, and virtual rather than real human connection" is a stressful and scary place in which to grow up. She concluded by saying that spiritual beliefs and practices provide benefits that will last them a lifetime.

Nothing surprising there, right? Mostly confirming, yes? Well then, what was so fascinating? This - she said she is often asked by parents about how to talk to their children about such things, including death and after-life, when they themselves don't believe in God or heaven. Her answer is always the same - "Lie... the idea that you simply die and turn to dust"... doesn't work for children!

Fascinating... lie to them! Why not tell them the simple truth? That we are all made in the image of God, our Personal Creator and Re-Creator... to share life together with Him and one another. A God of absolute character, the basis for absolute morals and values. The God of personal love, the Source of all personal relations. The God of eternal life, who has graciously made a way for us to live with Him forever. So, according to a non-Christian psychoanalyst, in Him alone will you find every "building block" you need for life as He created it to be lived! Fascinating!

## *Praise & Prayer*



For peace like a river



For love like a fountain



For joy like the ocean



For peace, love & joy to flow through us  
in a dry & weary land

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