



THE CHURCH FAMILY Conquering Complacency

May 13, 2023

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Galatians 3:28 (*The Message*) • “In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.”

John 17:22, 23 (NIV) • “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Ephesians 4:2-7 (*The Message*) • “And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness. But that doesn’t mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift.”

Romans 15:5, 6 (NIV) • “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 1:10 (*The Message*) • “I have a serious concern to bring up with you, my friends, using the authority of Jesus, our Master. I’ll put it as urgently as I can: You must get along with each other. You must learn to be considerate of one another, cultivating a life in common.”

Philippians 2:1-4 (*The Message*) • “If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

God’s Amazing Grace, p. 211 • “A union of believers with Christ will as a natural result lead to a union with one another, which bond of union is the most enduring upon earth. We are one in Christ, as Christ is one with the Father. . . . It is only by personal union with Christ, by

communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. . . . Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, all depend on our union with Christ and the degree of faith we exercise in Him.”

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “THE CHURCH FAMILY”

Most of us take it for granted that belonging to a church is a central part of the Christian life. But it's not always easy! Churches include a diverse group of people—different generations, different races, different cultures, different opinions. Understanding and accepting one another can be major hurdles. But Jesus calls us to do more than understand and accept one another—He challenges us to work together like parts of a healthy body, being His hands and feet to bring His love to the world.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH “THE CHURCH FAMILY”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand why it's important for the church family to get along.
2. Explore what contributes to church unity
3. Suggest ways they can contribute to unity in the local church.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) rope, gym mats; (Activity B) index cards or slips of paper.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, pencils, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Applying • White/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • In an open area with plenty of space (gym, auditorium, or other large room), mark off two corners of the room with waist-high rope, leaving enough room for about half your Sabbath School class to huddle together inside the rope. Set up gym mats outside the rope, if possible.

Get set • Divide the class in two and bring one group to each roped-off area. **Say:** **You are a group of prisoners trying to escape. The rope represents an electric fence with a very**

strong voltage. You have to get your whole group outside the fence safely, but if anyone touches the fence, your whole group has to go back inside and start over.

Go • Both groups try to get all members out from behind the “fence” safely.

Debriefing • Ask: In what ways did you have to work together as a team? Did the fact that you had to get the whole group out make it easier or harder? Can you think of any ways in which this exercise is similar to what we do as a church?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Divide the class into groups of four to six people. (A small class can be divided into just two groups, and the activity will still work with groups as small as three people.) On separate index cards, write different body parts: “hand,” “foot,” “eye,” etc.

Get set • Give each group a card and tell them to act out talk about how the body part on the card represents a set of skills that certain members in the church can contribute to serving others in the congregation. (For example, the members whose skill is that of the eye may easily discern what needs to be done, or how to find solutions to various issues.) Ask one person in each group to be the scribe and take notes from the discussion.

Debriefing • Ask: How did it feel to work together on this? In what way is this similar to working together in God’s kingdom? Why do you think God chose to compare the church to a human body? What was the hardest thing about working together to make a body part? What’s the hardest thing about working together in the church?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

One of Aesop’s fables tells of four oxen who were such great friends that they always kept together when feeding. A lion watched them for many days with longing eyes but, never being able to find one apart from the rest, was afraid to attack them. Whenever the lion came near, they turned their tails to one another so that whichever way the lion approached them it was met by horns. At length it succeeded in awakening jealousy among them, which grew into a mutual aversion, and they strayed a considerable distance from each other. The lion then fell upon them singly and killed them all.

The moral is “United we stand, divided we fall.” (From Pulpit Helps Online. Used by permission.)

Share the following ideas in your own words:

As soon as you’re old enough to visit your friends’ homes, you realize that every family is different. In some families everyone has a job to do. There might even be a job chart on the wall or the fridge. Other families aren’t as organized; yet things still seem to get done. And, sadly, some families don’t work well together at all—nothing ever gets done except fighting and arguing. Some families are full of love—even if they show it in different ways. Some families don’t seem to have enough love to go around.

In the Bible two major illustrations are used to tell us what the church should be like. One is a family; the other is a human body with all the parts working together. Just like families, some bodies work better than others. And some churches fit together more smoothly than others do. Even in successful churches, as in happy families, there are conflicts and misunderstandings. The difference is in the way they are handled.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Every kingdom has ambassadors. An ambassador is someone the king sends to a foreign country who represents the king and the kingdom. The Bible says that we are ambassadors for Christ. As an ambassador, or agent, you are to carry out the wishes of the King.

Our King has commanded that we go into the world and tell of His love for all humanity. He has also commanded that we help the hopeless and love the unlovely. He wants us to live not for ourselves, but to live beyond ourselves, unselfishly giving of our time, our money, and our lives to those in need.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: How does complacency and spiritual self-sufficiency prevent people from working together in church? How is a passive attendance of church services an enemy of unity? Why is it that unity requires action—cooperation for a common goal? Are there ever problems in a church that just can't be fixed, or is there always a way we can learn to work together?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-27** together.

Say: This Bible passage tells us that the church should work together like a body, with everyone having a role to play. Think about our local church here. Think about our earliteen Sabbath School class. What "body parts" are represented by different people? (Take some time to brainstorm examples: the

"hands" are people who do a lot of practical work for others; the "tongues" are people who are known for what they say; the "ears" are listeners, etc.) **Say:** Work together in groups of three or four and share with each other some of the talents and spiritual gifts you have received from God. Then associate your gifts with the various functions of the body parts described in the Bible passage we have read. For example, "I see myself as a hand because I like to participate in community service projects" or "because I like to play a musical instrument during church services." Think about the jobs you can do, the roles you can play, and how they contribute to making the "body" work.

On a white/chalkboard, draw a large simple outline of a person and have the groups share their answers. Encourage students to share what role they can play in the "church body."

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Ask: We've talked about the ideal—everyone working together. We're going to do some brainstorming now. I want you to think about this church, the one you attend every week.

Ask: What's one practical thing we—as an earliteen Sabbath School class—can do to help people understand each other better? (Write answers on the board.)

Again, examples may be necessary to get the ball rolling: plan a multicultural worship service or social activity in which members can experience one another's cultures; team up teen class members with senior citizens in a buddy system and plan some activities together to enhance understanding.

Choose an activity that catches the class members' imagination and take some time to plan how your class will implement it.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of people in the church do you need to learn about and work together with? Why?
2. Have you ever seen people who were very different overcome their differences to work as a team? How did it happen?
3. What would you tell a new Christian friend who was discouraged by the lack of active involvement of church members in mission work?
4. What effect does it have on new Christians (including teens like yourselves) when people in church don't get along and quarrel with each other? What would you tell a new Christian friend who was discouraged by adults in the church disagreeing with each other?
5. Do you feel as if you "fit in" and have a role to play in this church? If not, what can you do about that? What can you do to help others find their role?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Parts of a body. Members of a family. The church is supposed to be a collection of individuals, different yet united. We won't all think, act, look, or worship the same—but we do have to worship together. And we have work to do—together. That means overcoming our differences.

The ideas we've explored in this lesson remind us that working together isn't always easy. But it's essential. And it's one of those things that God gives us the power to do, when we open our lives up to Him.

We can't change other people—even though we often think that's what it will take to make the church a united, loving family. We can allow God to change us through His Spirit, to show us what we can do and how we can contribute. He has a part for each one of us. Each body part has a significant role and function in the body of Christ. Everyone is welcome as an important part of the family of God.



STUDENT LESSON

THE CHURCH FAMILY Conquering Complacency

May 13, 2023

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20, 21, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ:** “We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 123, 124

CONQUERING COMPLACENCY

There is not much left today, but Laodicea must have been quite a city. It is off the beaten path, and few tourists visit the site today. Very little excavation has been done. In its prime Laodicea was home to nearly 150,000 people. It was an important trade center of Asia Minor, an imperial city famous for the glossy black wool manufactured there.

Laodicea was an extremely wealthy banking center. When it was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, its citizens refused financial help to

rebuild the city. The proud Laodiceans erected it out of their own resources. The city was also advanced in the healing arts. Its medical practitioners developed a well-known salve for the eyes.

Revelation’s message to Laodicea reached this prosperous place toward the end of the first century. The letter addresses a spiritual problem that afflicts almost all of us at one time or another.

The letter begins with Christ’s diagnosis of the problem. He says, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15, 16, NKJV).

Jesus uses a metaphor to describe a spiritual problem. Lukewarm water is neither hot nor cold. It’s not hot enough to provide a good bath. It’s not cold enough to be good drinking water. It’s something you instinctively spew out of your mouth.

What is the Doctor talking about? Complacency, indifference? The Laodiceans weren’t hot. They didn’t have a passion for knowing God. But they weren’t cold, either. They hadn’t rejected God. They weren’t exploring the alternative. They were lukewarm. They had just enough spiritual life to make them comfortable, but not enough to move them anywhere.

What is the real answer to spiritual complacency? How do you rise out of spiritual lethargy? You begin by taking a step in faith.

Stretch past your comfortable boundaries.

Set aside a specific time each day for prayer. Choose a book of the Bible and read it through. Commit passages of Scripture to memory. Take a new witnessing challenge in the name of Jesus. You break out of spiritual complacency by taking some definite action that stretches you to the limit. What spiritual challenge will you accept today?

—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 312

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read 2 Timothy 2:23, 24.
- » Imagine that in your church you are witnessing a state of spiritual lethargy. It could be that spiritual self-sufficiency keeps people from getting involved actively in mission. Let's suppose that many of the people in the congregation attend church only to receive spiritual blessings and services. What are the dangers of going to church simply to be entertained?
- » What could you do to contribute to a solution? How could you be a change agent? How would service and active involvement help church members wake up and move away from spiritual complacency?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- » Read Matthew 28:19, 20; Ephesians 4:5, 6; Colossians 3:10-15.
- » Unity—harmony, agreement, solidarity—working together toward a common goal. Our goal and mission is saving souls. If we focus on Christ and live so that others see Him in us, we will not be looking at the differences between us. God wants unity in our homes and in our churches.

- » How is unity displayed in your church?

- » How does your family, your church, handle differences?

- » Fill in the missing words. Texts are from the New King James Version.

"For as the body is _____ and has _____ members, but all the _____ of that one _____, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by _____ Spirit we were _____ into one body—whether _____ or _____, whether _____ or _____—and have _____ been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the _____ is not _____ member but _____" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Galatians 3:27-29.
- » The Bible says that all the members of God's church are supposed to work together as smoothly as the parts of a human body. The trouble is that in real life we see the feet arguing with the eyes, the ears insisting they can smell better than the nose—even right and left hands thumb-wrestling with each other! It's not easy being part of a church that includes lots of different kinds of people.
- » Working together starts with accepting differences. We're not all going to think or act alike. We accept people better when we understand them.
- » Maybe your church includes a lot of people from different racial or cultural groups—maybe even people from different countries who speak different languages. The more you learn about another person's culture,

the better you'll understand where they're coming from.

- » The same thing goes for younger and older people in the church. Senior citizens may not understand what it's like being a teenager today. And you may not realize how different things were when they grew up, and how much that shapes the way they look at the world. Taking a little time to talk to each other and learn about differences can help all of you in the process to build positive relationships.

- » "Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God" (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 96).

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the phrase with the text. All verses are from the New King James Version.

John 13:34, 35	Ephesians 4:4-6
Psalms 133:1	Romans 15:1, 2
1 Corinthians 3:3	2 Timothy 2:23, 24
2 Corinthians 5:17	Ephesians 4:31, 32

1. "... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all ..."
2. "... where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you ..."
3. "... a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all ..."
4. "... that you love one another, as I have loved you ..."
5. "... he is a new creation; old things have passed away ..."

6. "... how good and how pleasant it is ..."
7. "... be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another ..."
8. "... and not to please ourselves ..."

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, 27.
- » Review the memory text.
- » You're part of the church—part of Christ's body. You may be an eye, clearly seeing what's going on. You may be an ear, excellent at listening to both sides of the story. You may be a hand, ready to help in practical ways. You may be the tongue—quick to say the words everyone needs to hear.
- » You have a role to play in helping the church work together smoothly. Your part might be reaching out to someone who's new and doesn't fit in yet. You may have to try to understand and get along with someone who really irritates you. You may be called on to pitch in and help with a project.
- » Christianity is about your relationship with God—one on one. When you join God's kingdom, you join His family. Growing closer to God also means growing closer to God's people, learning to understand each other, forgiving each other, and working together.
- » "Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another. Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action" (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 179).

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read Psalm 133:1.
- » The church is made up of individuals and all the differences that each individual brings. Each of these individuals is a child of God and is loved so much that He sent His only Son to redeem them. You are one of His children. Redeemed. Loved. Just as each part of the body has a job to do, so do you. Your job, as a child of God, is to share His love with your family, your church, your neighborhood, your world. Think about and then answer the following questions.

What part of the body do you relate to? Are you an ear because you like to listen? A hand or foot because you like to help others? Or are you a mouth because you like to talk, read, or speak to others?

What are some things I can do to bring my church closer together?

