



1. Sunday Summary: Often times we think that if we get our beliefs and our theology right it will automatically lead to right action, obedience and holier life. Unfortunately, our lives don't work like that. Take the church as an example. We have all kind of good beliefs about the church that should lead us to making the church a place where everyone belongs. But why, then, do so many people still insist that they don't experience the "communion of the saints" among us? One answer is that we need practice and practices to work our right beliefs into our lives.

This morning we talked about two of those practices:

1) Beginning to act like the family that we are. We don't get to be choosy about our family. We are all brothers and sisters whether we like it or not. So, we act in loving ways toward each other even if we don't feel that way. Acting like a family also means that we are not a club. What we do in our lives, and how we represent Christ is, to some extent, everyone's business. Therefore, we encourage that in our lives by being in intentional accountability relationships.

2) Acting in loving and honouring ways to those outside of our community. One of our absolute fundamental Christian beliefs is in a man who died on a cross for people who were his enemies, and who persecuted him – Jesus Christ. This fact needs to drive us to do the same. We bless those who curse us. When was the last time any of us really worked to bless those we see as opposed to us?

2. Connecting Questions: (Interactive, life sharing, thought & feeling type stuff)

- Do you think it's possible to practice your way into change? Think about a time that that worked in your life? Have there been any times that it didn't work? We know it works with things like practicing piano, or sports. Do the same principles apply in our spiritual lives?
- What's been your experience of the church? Has it been a place of welcome and belonging for you? Talk about that.
- What were the relationships in your own family like? Whether they were good or not-so-good, was there still a bondedness between you and your family? Explore that together.

- When you think of enemies, who comes to mind for you, and why? How about opponents of the Christian faith? Have you ever worked hard to bless someone who was opposed to you? If so, what was the outcome? If not, why not?
- What insights from today's message were most helpful for you?

3. Truth Questions: (What does the Bible say?)

- Read Romans 12:9-21 again. Paul gives us a lot of commands (imperatives) in this section of Scripture. There's a lot to remember here. Is there a unifying principle you could point to, either in this passage or another passage of Scripture that might summarize all these commands?
- Think together of other places in Scripture that talk about how we relate to our enemies. What can you come up with? Why is it important that Christians relate to our enemies this way?
- Can you think of other passages that talk about how we relate to others in the church? What can you come up with? Why is it important that we relate to each other this way?

4. Formation Questions: (Taking it further, How does the Truth change the way I live?)

- What concrete steps can you make to sink the truth of this morning's message deeper into your life this week? How will you (or maybe just, will you) practice the practices we talked about this week?
- The Apostle Paul gives us several commands in the passage we read that fit well with living in the kind of family relationships we discussed. This week we've had some great news in our congregation (one individual was healed of cancer), and some really hard news (Koen was given about two weeks to live). How will you "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn" this week?
- Are there other commandments from this passage that you will actively work on this week? How?

5. Resources for Further Study:

1. Mulder, Karen & Jurries, Ginger. *The Compassionate Congregation: a handbook for people who care*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006).