

FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY

1 Peter 2:17

September 16, 2007 Sunday A.M.

INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week we began to reexamine the five purposes for living found in the Bible and Rick Warren's book, "The Purpose Driven Life" (Recite Them).
- B. We also looked at the first of the five: "We were planned for God's Pleasure."
 - 1. We remember that the most important thing to "know" is that God loves us. And the most important thing for us to "do" is love God back.
 - 2. We also saw three ways to love God back...
 - a. Focusing our attention on God every day.
 - b. Focusing our affection on God by giving him our lives.
 - c. Focusing our abilities on God for his glory.
- C. Today we are looking at our second purpose for living: "We were formed for God's family."
 - 1. It may surprise you to find out that God wants a family. In fact, that's why he created us—Ephesians 1:5.
 - 2. Furthermore, God wants us to love our spiritual family as much as he does-1 Peter 2:17.
 - 3. In fact, loving our fellow family members (other Christians) is an indication we really love God-1 John 4:21.
 - 4. We need to realize that "church" isn't a place we go. Church is a family we belong to.
 - 5. In God's family there are four levels of membership or fellowship. What are they?

I. THE FIRST LEVEL OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS CHOOSING TO BELONG.

- A. The Christian life isn't just a matter of believing. It's a matter of belonging-Ephesians 2:19.
- B. Chuck Colson, saved after going to prison during the Watergate Scandal, writes in his book, "The Body"...p.70.
 - "...membership in a confessing body is fundamental to the faithful Christian life. Failure to do so defies the explicit warning not to forsake "our assembling together." His understanding of this prompted Martin Luther to say, "Apart from the church, salvation is impossible." Not that the church provides salvation; God does. But because the "saved" one can't fulfill what it means to be a Christian apart from the church, membership becomes the indispensable mark of salvation.
- C. Some people say, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I don't want to belong to any church." But that's like saying, "I'm a football player but I don't want to be a part of any team, or I'm a tuba player but I don't want to be a part of a band. A Christian a part from a church family is a orphan.
- D. How can we join God's family?
 - 1. First, if you aren't a Christian, that's the first step.
 - 2. Second, if you are a Christian and already a member of another Baptist church, you can transfer your membership. We do it all for you.
 - 3. Third, if you are a Christian and a member of a church other than a Baptist church, you can join through baptism (Illustration of Ring, not questioning your salvation or baptism).
 - 4. Fourth, if you are a believer, but never been baptized then you can join a church.

II. THE SECOND LEVEL OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS FRIENDSHIP.

- A. The Christian life isn't a solo act-Acts 2:44.
- B. Notice the early church shared with each other ("had everything common"). What did they share?
 - 1. First, they shared their experiences. People learn from one another's successes and failures-Proverbs 27:17.
 - 2. Second, they shared their homes-1 Peter 4:9. Why is this important?
 - a. Because you can worship in a crowd, but you can only fellowship in a small group.

- b. For 300 years after the church was formed there were no church buildings. All church meetings were held in homes. Today, our homes are our fortresses and we don't know our neighbors anymore.
- 3. Third, they shared their problems. You can't solve everyone's problems, but you can at least listen to them-Gal 6:2.
- C. A bar is the closest thing to a church the world has.
 - 1. The TV show "Cheers" fits this description.
 - 2. Sam was like the pastor.
 - 3. The bartenders were the deacons.
 - 4. Waitresses were the greeters and ushers.
 - 5. Today's bar is a counterfeit church...
 - "Where everybody knows your name.
 - And they're always glad you came.
 - You wanna go where people know-
 - People are all the same.
 - You wanna go where everybody knows your name.

III. THE THIRD LEVEL OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS PARTNERSHIP.

- A. We are called by God to work together-1 Cor. 3:9.
- B. I visited a man who hadn't been to church in a while. When I asked him why, he replied, "I feel like I'm just taking up space over there!"
- C. God calls us to be partners together in his church, not to just take up space—Ephesians 4:16.

IV. THE FOURTH LEVEL OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS KINSHIP.

- A. Kinship means your close relationships. When someone is in a serious accident, their next of kin is notified. This isn't your second cousin once removed.
- B. Christians are to be kinsmen-Romans 12:10.

CONCLUSION

- A. This is what the church is all about—loving God and learning to love each other.
 - 1. Loving God is called "worship."
 - 2. Loving others is called "fellowship."
- B. Remember, life isn't about accomplishments. Its about relationships.