

TOGETHER SERIES

The ingredients of a healthy Family group
(SERMON SERIES - PART 3 OF 5)

ALLISTAIR CLOETE

27 JANUARY 2019

1. RECAP

JAMES – Started the “Together series” two weeks ago highlighting:

- The **importance of being together** and
- Referred the Book of ACTS – How the disciples prayed and did everything together.

We were also learned that “Together” takes:

- A mind shift
- A Recasting of our schedule;

MARC – continued last week pointing out that

- “Together” was always God’s plan for us and not an after thought.
- We also learned that for “Together life” to work their needs to be **giving and taking** 😊

2. INTRODUCTION

So, we’ve established the importance of

- Doing life together and
- The fact that was always God’s plan.

But the focus over the last two weeks was around “togetherness” as a church but what does **Togetherness as a smaller, family group** look like?

This is what I’ll be discussing today.

3. PRAYER

....

4. KEY SCRIPTURE

When describing our church in terms of small groups, I like the way James (our James not the one in the bible) put it...

"We are a church OF small groups and not a church WITH small groups."

There is a **big difference** – Small groups or family groups (as I prefer to call it) **are not separate entities** - It is **who we are** as a church.

I prefer **Family groups** because it speaks of closeness and deeper relationships.

In fact that is what attracted Karen and myself to this church.

MY TESTIMONY

For those who don't know - We "googled" the church!

When we first came to the church we knew no one at all –

We're made to feel welcome from the moment we visited (even though we found it slightly weird in the beginning – i.e. the many side hugs)

The **unconditional love** and **genuine acceptance** we received from our small group was amazing!

It will be our 8th spiritual birthday this Tuesday and I remember very fondly the...

- Meals and braai's at Rogers house;
- Our son Caleb's 4th birthday party at Danie Nell's house;
- And the many amazing small group get together at Rudi's place.

I still believe that the warm, welcoming Family groups are one of the great strengths that God has graced our church with.

So, this will be more of a refresher than new teaching.

Let's look at scripture that I believe sums up what a **loving and thriving family group** looks like.

ROMANS 12:9-18

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in

affliction, faithful in prayer.¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.¹ Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone"

CONTEXT:

Earlier in Chapter 12,

ROMANS 12:1

*Therefore, I urge you, **brothers and sisters**, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God*

"In the view of God's Mercy..." – Paul is saying that the motivation to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice **should be as a response to God's mercy**, not because Paul (or I'm) saying it.

Paul **"urges the brothers and sisters" (vs 1)** (talking to disciples):

- **Not** to be confirmed to the **pattern of the world** (vs 2);
- To be humble – **"rather think of yourself with sober judgment"** (vs 3)
- **We are all members of one body**, each part with different gifts – needing to play its part. (vs 4-8)

Which brings us to where will have read and will be focused on...

Romans 12:9-18

5. MESSAGE

So Paul, what are the ingredients of a **Spiritually Healthy** and **thriving** family group?

ROMANS 12:9

⁹ Love must be sincere...

What does SINCERE LOVE mean?

Discuss it under 3 points:

1. SHOWING SINCERE INTEREST IN ONE ANOTHER

Making members feel supported...

Romans 12:15

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

A thriving group is made up of...

- Celebrating successes together and
- Grieving together...

EXAMPLE: MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN...

It's being there for someone who is grieving – support at the funeral or even a message.

EXAMPLE: CELEBRATE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE...

An American preacher once said – If you want to know if a brother or sister supports you and celebrates your successes then rent an expensive sports car for a couple of days and visit some friends.

When you pull up with your “new car” and invite them for a ride check their expression.

Sincere love is

(1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

- Patient,
- Kind,
- Does not envy or boast,
- Does not dishonor others,

- Is not self seeking and
- Keeps no record of wrongs...

That's what thriving families do –

- They Celebrate each others successes
- They support each other through moments of sadness
- They are patient with people who are afflicted
- They forgive each other, without holding grudges.

2. BE DOVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER

ROMANS 12:10

Be devoted to one another in love...

Dictionary definition of "devoted" –

Devoted meaning:

Giving all or most of one's time or resources.

As a family group what does being devoted mean:

- **Regular times together (TIME)** - Family dinners and offline conversations. Celebrations, etc.
- **Sharing what you have (RESOURCES)**

Romans 12: 13

Share with those in need. Practice hospitality

This means - Opening your home **and your Heart** to all disciples.

Giving up Time and resources sounds tough but most of us are already doing it.

EXAMPLES:

- **FINANCES:** Raising almost R 1,000,000 for special;

- **TIME:** It always amazes me how many people attend the various workshops and talks – Our Spiritual Boot camp the end of last year... i.e. Saturday workshop + 2 talks the Sunday

This requires **WORK** and **TIME** and **PLENTY OF CONVERSATIONS** to work through... It requires **DEVOTION**

That's what thriving families do –

- They make **time** for each other
- They share their resources with each other.
- What's mine is ours

3. EMBRACING ONE ANOTHER

The Embracing referred to here is not the “side hugs” but...

EMBRACING DEFINITION:

*To accept (a belief, theory, or change) **willingly and enthusiastically.***

In other words:

Embracing goes beyond simply **accepting**

I don't just accept someone else's **culture or language** but I willingly and enthusiastically embrace it.

ROMANS 12:10

Honour one another above yourself

This means:

- **Respecting one other opinion** and Compromise - Refer to Marc's "Giving and taking example"
- **Focus on others needs** - May mean doing things that you don't necessarily enjoy.

ROMANS 12:16

...Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.¹ Do not be conceited.

- **Associate with all**, even those in a “low position” –
- This means **no judgment** and creating a **space for all to share** openly without fear of being judged.

Romans 12:16

Live in harmony with one another

Does this mean that we will always see eye to eye and sing Kumbaya as we walk into the sun? No!

NO FAMILY IS PERFECT

Will everyone feel **loved** all the time? –No!

Will everyone feel **supported** all the time? – No!

But that’s the life of family. As a Cloete family we struggle with this all the time. You don’t get the perfect family!

- Some of us need a little support to feel LOVED,
- While others need a lot of support... to feel LOVED

And that’s fine –

HOWEVER, We need to **be careful not to put unrealistic expectations on the members of the church.**

As an example, we often have unnecessarily high expectation from **our spouses** expecting them to be a **Superman** or **Wonder Woman** and they need to meet each and every one of our needs... They are one person – they can’t.

ROMANS 12:18

¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone”

Paul understood that there would be differences and that it won’t always be easy.... He continues

ROMANS 12:19-20

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Cross-reference:

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

I need to add - I've been to at least a dozen churches before becoming a member here and this is where I feel most supported and loved! I feel so privileged to be a part of this amazing family.

We need to be embracing (not just accepting) our differences.

LOGO ILLUSTRATION:

We are a **multi-generational, multi-cultural** church, who believe that God's word is the final authority. And because HE called us we can live in Harmony with one another we can.

(SHOW the TOGETHER logo with the multi color hands)

Refer to the **TOGETHER logo** and explain why each hand is multi-coloured – not a number of different coloured hands.



That's what thriving families do –

- They accommodate each other
- They consider each others needs above their own
- They are free to share their emotions, without being judged
- Talk through differences.

6. CONCLUSION

HEBREWS 10:24

²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

A thriving family group together – requires:

- Sincere interest in each other
- Devotion for One another
- Embracing (not just accepting) one another.

SPIRITUAL FAMILY TOGETHER EXAMPLE – Meeting Last Sunday

Welgemoed “Blessies Prayer group” –

James and Maura suggested that the Parents get together on Sunday afternoon to prayer for our children at the school and to reach out.

Unique initiative – There was some truly, truly special about that. I have no doubt that God will bless it. A real example of being Together.

(SHOW PHOTO BELOW ENLARGED)



7. CLOSING PRAYER

...