

The Internal Systems, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

In this study on the anatomy of a church, I want to do some spiritual archeology. I want to dig up a small part of Grace Church's foundation so that you can see the basics that Grace Church is committed to. At the same time, I am borrowing from Paul's analogy of a church as a body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). There are four features of the body that we are looking at in this study: the skeleton, the internal systems, the muscles, and the flesh. The first feature we looked at was...

I. THE SKELETON

A skeleton gives a church a framework. It helps give it support. The skeleton is what holds the body together and enables it to move. There are five nonnegotiable, foundational principles that a church must be committed to:

A. A High View of God

B. The Absolute Authority of Scripture

C. Sound Doctrine

D. Personal Holiness

E. Spiritual Authority

We must always exalt God. We should always make studying, preaching, and teaching God's Word a priority. We must be committed to learning doctrine from the Bible that is accurate and applicable to life. With the strength we have in the Holy Spirit, we are to pursue holiness. We must understand spiritual authority: Those who are spiritual leaders have great responsibility, as well as those who follow.

When I preach, I frequently mention all of those basic things because I want to keep reminding people of the framework that is essential in the makeup of the church. I will always go back to the basic themes of God, Scripture, doctrine, holiness, and spiritual authority. Sometimes I may sound like I'm repeating a past sermon, but I generally don't do that. Those things have to be repeated frequently so when I'm gone, the people I've taught will still remember them. Peter did the same thing (2 Pet. 1:12-14). Paul said in Philippians 2:12, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." I would have great satisfaction if I could look down at Grace Church from

heaven after I die and say, "The people of Grace Church are still committed to the things they were when I was there. "

I believe that the skeletal, nonnegotiable principles that a church should be committed to should be emphasized repeatedly by its preacher. I also believe those principles should be a part of a church's teaching ministry: If you teach a Bible study, a children's class, or disciple someone, you need to reiterate the foundational principles so that everyone in the body of Christ will be what they should be. There must be a demonstration of commitment not only in what the people of a church say, but in the lives they live. I must live my commitment to personal holiness, doctrinal clarity, and the authority of Scripture, or my preaching would be worthless.

The second thing a church needs is. . .

II. THE INTERNAL SYSTEMS

A church must have flowing through it certain spiritual attitudes. A physical body has organs and fluids in it that help keep the body alive and functioning. A skeleton gives a framework to a church, but it isn't alive. The life of a church comes from its spiritual attitudes. The goal of a pastor and the leaders of a church should be to generate proper spiritual attitudes in the hearts of the people. The leaders of a church can't just say, "You need to do this, and you need to do that. " They must generate the spiritual attitudes in people that will motivate them to proper behavior. A person can do something good outwardly, yet have a bad attitude. However, good outward behavior should come from good attitudes. That's why it's so important to emphasize the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)--the internal attitudes.

Sometimes young men go into a pastorate and see certain things missing in their church. They see a lack of organization, and become tempted to reorganize the church. They'll say, "Let's appoint some elders, and reorganize this church!" But do you know what will happen after the reorganizing is finished? They're going to have the same people with the same attitudes in a different structure, and the people are not going to understand the purposes of the change.

When I first came to Grace Church, I had a new idea about how to run the Sunday school. I wrote out my idea and presented it to the Education Committee. They unanimously turned it down. They said, "Who are you, kid? We've been here longer than you. " In effect, they were saying, "Prove yourself. " Several years later, the Education Committee came up with the same system I had proposed. That showed me that it was important to develop in people the spiritual attitudes that will bring about the right kind of responses. If the right kind of spiritual attitudes are present in a church, then the structure will take care of itself, because Spirit-controlled people are going to do Spirit-led things. They will naturally conform to the biblical pattern of the church.

A church should work on the attitudes of its people. I'm not interested in trying to make sure the people of Grace Church behave a certain way by giving their money; coming to church Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, and Wednesday nights; praying five hours a week; and reading the Bible every day. Those things are not to be approached on a legalistic or superficial basis. The emphasis of a ministry should be on generating proper spiritual attitudes. Sometimes that's difficult to do because some people don't want to have right attitudes, and it becomes easy to let them do "good" things with a bad attitude. But doing that will allow the people with bad attitudes to derive

satisfaction from legalistic behavior.

Let's look at the attitudes that should be in our hearts. First of all, we should have an attitude of. . .

A. Obedience

1. THE REQUIREMENT TO BE OBEDIENT

This attitude overarches all other attitudes. An obedient person does whatever God says to do. He does not compromise. If God says something, that's it--there is nothing to argue about. It's important for us to have God's Word in our hearts and minds so that we know how to be obedient. There are several important reasons for us to live obedient lives: to glorify God, to receive blessings, to be a witness to unbelievers, and to be an example for other Christians. Being obedient also allows us to be filled with the Spirit. When we're filled with the Spirit, we're able to reach out to unbelievers and set an example for those who watch how we live.

You say, "The fact that we should be obedient seems to be obvious." That's because you became a Christian by affirming the lordship of Jesus Christ. You said, "Jesus, You're in charge of my life now. You're Lord, and I'm Your servant." Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In other words, He's saying, "Don't call Me Lord, and not obey Me!" If Jesus is Lord in your life, then you should do what He asks you to do. Matthew 7:13-14 says that the path to salvation is narrow. That's because it is confined by God's will, law, and Word. We are to affirm Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10) and submit to the lordship of Christ. Doing that means living a life of obedience.

2. THE REFUSAL TO BE OBEDIENT

a. Without an Understanding of God's Word

A man who listened to our radio program sent a letter and a tape to me, sharing a matter that was on his heart. During the first ten minutes of the tape, he talked about how he listened to our radio program and appreciated the study of the Bible. Then he said that he had many sins in his life that God was working on, one of which he wanted to ask me about. He said that he had never had normal feelings toward women; instead, he had strong feelings toward farm animals. However, he didn't think it was a problem because he didn't feel any guilt about it. He felt that the Lord was refining him in other areas, and not that one. A four-page letter was sent back to him explaining that his problem was a sin in the eyes of God. In fact, if he had lived in the Old Testament era, he would have been killed, for Leviticus 20:15 says, "... if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death. . . ." The letter kindly expressed that God doesn't select certain sins to work on and leave others alone. Any sin is an affront to His holy name. Several Scripture references were given in the letter to support what was said.

A while later, that man sent another tape to me. He said, "I don't think anybody understands. Christians are so tangled up in God's Word that they don't understand how God works and feels." Let me say this: How are we going to know how God feels about something if we don't read the Bible? That man didn't want to listen to what God had to say about his problem because he said he didn't feel any guilt. I wonder if he is even a Christian, because 1 John 2:5 says, "... whosoever keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; by this know we that we are in Him." If you're a Christian, then you'll keep God's commandments. A person who can have that kind of abomination in his life and say that he knows how God feels without reading the Bible has a problem. Sin makes a person become self-justifying.

That's an extreme illustration, but it points out the fact that God has called us to be obedient to His

Word. We should know how He feels about things because He tells us in His Word. The goal of ministry should be to build an obedient people. That is what God intended to do in both the Old and New Testaments. When God speaks, we are to obey.

b. With an Understanding of God's Word

Sadly, when some people are confronted with divine truth that convicts them of something in their life that isn't right, they will continue in their pattern of disobedience. For example: Suppose you hear a sermon about forgiveness, and there is somebody you know that you need to forgive. But you push that sermon out of your mind and continue to have a bitter, unforgiving spirit. That is disobedience. It is diametrically opposed to all that God wants to accomplish in your life.

3. THE REFERENCES FOR BEING OBEDIENT

You say, "I go to church. Isn't that enough?" First Samuel 15:22 says, "... Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. . . ." Ritual will never replace obedience. In 1 Peter 1, the Apostle says that you are to "gird up the loins of your mind" (v. 13a). In other words, make sure that your priorities are right. Be "obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14). Don't live like you did before you became a Christian. You are to be an obedient child. Jesus said, "... blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). Paul, commending some of the Roman Christians, said, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad. . ." (Rom. 16:19). A pastor's heart is made happy when the obedience of his people is manifest.

4. THE RESULT OF BEING OBEDIENT

Recently, while I was driving, I turned on the radio and Howard Hendricks was speaking. He said something that I thought was very interesting: He said that people who have been Christians for a long time and are over fifty years old should be the most excited, committed, purest, and servant-like people in a church. The very energy of a church ought to be from the people who are over fifty years old. They should be the ones on the forefront in evangelism and prayer. Why? Because they've lived with God the longest. They've applied the Word to their lives for so long that they've become more obedient and mature than those who have been Christians for only a few years.

I think it is wonderful that Grace Church has many young people. I like young people because they are energetic. But it's a sad thing to say that the energy of a church only comes from its young people. The old people in the church ought to be the dynamic ones. Often I hear young pastors say, "My church is good and is in a nice area, but it's full of old people."

5. THE RESIGNATION FROM BEING OBEDIENT

If you're a Christian but don't apply God's Word to your life, you'll just become one of those inert older people. You'll become over fifty years old, and want to retire spiritually. You'll say, "I've been going to church for many years. I don't want to get involved in evangelism; I'd rather leave that kind of thing for younger people." Look at the Old Testament leaders of Israel: Many of them were older people! The early church found its energy in their mature saints. Today, the church is deriving its energy from young people. We need the energy that young people have, but we also need the power that older believers have developed from their long, obedient lives. An older believer should be ready to blast off into heaven from the energy he has built up! But because many believers don't apply what they hear as they get older, their lives don't change. They may know a lot of spiritual facts, but they have no power. I don't want that to happen in my life. I don't want to say that I ran out of energy for serving Christ by the time I was fifty years old. I think the reason many people eventually stop serving Christ is because they've heard the Bible but haven't applied it.

We must be committed to obeying God's Word. If the Spirit teaches you a truth, apply it. When you're confronted with conviction, don't say, "I wish so-and-so could have heard that sermon." Apply

the sermon to yourself. When you obey Christ, you grow in spiritual maturity and become more useful to God.

The second attitude a Christian should have is. . .

B. Humility

1. THE PURSUIT OF HUMILITY

I've had problems with pride in the past. I'm sure that you've had problems with it, too. Humility is very elusive because when you say to yourself, "I'm humble," you're being proud.

An Uncomfortable Chair

I have always desired to help people in their understanding of humility. At Grace Church, when we built the auditorium that we now use as a gymnasium, someone ordered five big chairs with crowns at the top of their backs. Before the services started, I was supposed to sit in the chair in the middle. I tried that for a couple of weeks, and didn't like it. Instead, I preferred to sit in the front row of the pews with the congregation. I didn't want people thinking I was proud of myself or better than them. Sitting in the front row of the pews gives me the same perspective as everyone else: I was in church to worship God. The only difference between my congregation and me is that God has called me to be a preacher and given me the gift of preaching. I'm not a pastor because of my spirituality.

The Holy Spirit tells us through the Scripture to seek humility. We're to pursue it with the strength that God has given us.

2. THE POSITION OF HUMILITY

I hope that when you became a Christian, you weren't under the illusion that God needed you. Some people say, "If the Lord could only save that person! He has such great talent and is a good leader. " That's ridiculous. The Lord can save anybody He wants. Also, we have nothing to offer to God. We're like the man in Matthew 18:23-34 who couldn't pay his ten- thousand-talent debt. He had nothing to offer. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In other words, when we came into God's Kingdom, we came as destitute beggars who had nothing to offer. We were spiritually bankrupt. If we have anything now, it isn't because we earned it; God gave it to us. The only thing I have to offer back to God is what He gave me through His gift of salvation and His Spirit. I can't take any credit for what I am; I must give God the glory. I have no reason to be proud.

3. THE PRIORITY OF HUMILITY

The leaders of Grace Church have endeavored to withstand the preoccupation people have with self-esteem and the selfishness of our contemporary society. We point out the fact that God has called Christians to be sacrificial and humble. The Bible talks repeatedly about humility. Jesus said in Matthew 10:38-39, "Let a man deny himself, take up his cross, and gain his life by following Me. " He said the same thing in Matthew 16:24-25: "Deny yourself and follow Me. Pay the price of self-effacement and set yourself below others. " In Philippians 2:3-4 we read, " . . . in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Seek to honor other people and meet their needs. If the people of a church are fighting for the positions of authority, then they are going to have the same chaos there was when all the disciples were seeking to be the greatest (Mt. 20:20-21; Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 22:24).

4. THE PERSPECTIVES OF HUMILITY

a. A Proper Perspective of Self

We should desire to be humble. That doesn't mean we are to undervalue ourselves, because in Christ we are eternally priceless. However, Christ is the One who made us priceless--we didn't do that ourselves. Humility means seeing another person as more important than yourself. We aren't to walk around saying, "I'm a worm; I'm a rat; I'm a bum; I'm nothing. " We're of value to God because we're redeemed and sanctified. That enables us to serve Him.

b. A Proper Perspective of Others

A humble person sees others as more important than himself. Matthew 19:19 says, ". . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. " You are to have the same commitment to meeting your neighbor's needs as you do your own.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul reprimanded the Corinthian Christians for the boastful, self-centered way that they exhibited their ecstatic experiences. They thought they were more spiritual than other Christians because of their ecstasies. God desires the people in His church to have an attitude of humility. If I have an attitude of humility, then I'm not going to be upset if something good comes your way and not mine. You're more important than I am. To be humble means that I set aside some of my priorities to make sure your needs are met. It means that I will not do things that violate your conscience (Rom. 14:13-15). If meat or certain drinks offend you, then I won't have those things in your presence (Rom. 14:20-21), "for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Humility means that I'm not going to do anything that will make you stumble; I'm going to set my liberty aside. I must care for you and love you. If you drift from the flock, then I must pursue you and bring you back (Mt. 18:15-17). We're all to have the meekness and gentleness of Christ that Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 10:1. It has always been my desire to see the people of Grace Church be obedient to God, and have an attitude of humility rather than self-centeredness. So many problems come up when people seek their own will. Some people enjoy being told how wonderful they are; instead, they should give their lives to encourage others.

The third attitude we should have is. . .

C. Love

1. THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

Only people that are humble can show love. Now, I'm not talking about the worldly kind of love that is counterfeit and object- oriented. That's why many marriages don't last: Worldly love is only an emotion, and when the emotion is gone, the relationship is gone. The world thinks that kind of love is great because of the feelings accompanied by those emotions. That kind of love seeks only to get and not to give. Then when the thrill of a relationship dies away, the relationship is ended.

2. THE LOVE OF THE WORD

Biblical love is not like that. It's not an emotion. Biblical love is an act of sacrificial service. It's not an attitude; it's an action. Love always does something. The words used to describe love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 are all verbs. Love is an act of service on your behalf that flows out of a heart of humility. A humble person says, "I care more about you than myself," and acts out his care in love. That's why I say that only humble people can love others. Proud people can't love others because they're too busy caring for themselves. The only love they know is a physical love; they have emotional attachments to certain people. They don't care about anybody else. They enjoy being with others who are like them, and are indifferent to the needs of everybody else.

a. Demonstrated by the Good Samaritan

Biblical love meets people's needs. Jesus said in Luke 10:27, ". . . Thou shalt love. . . thy neighbor

as thyself. " Then He was asked by a lawyer, ". . . And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29b). Jesus answered with the story about the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-35). The Samaritan was walking on a road and came upon a man who had been badly beaten. He helped him out, and met his needs. Who is your neighbor? Anyone you meet who has a need. Who are you to love? Anyone who has a need. How do you love him? Meet his need, even if you don't feel an emotional attachment or an attraction for him. Love flows from humility; the humble person considers other people more important than himself.

b. Demonstrated by God's Son

A classic illustration of humility is in John 13. Jesus and the disciples were to have supper together. The disciples were arguing among themselves who was the greatest (Lk. 22:24). In those days, people ate meals in a reclining position, which meant that a person's head would be about eight inches from someone else's feet. It was common courtesy for everyone's feet to be washed before they reclined for eating. But there was no servant available to wash the disciples' feet. None of the disciples were willing to wash everyone else's feet because they were arguing about who was the greatest. So Jesus took off His outer garment, put a towel around His waist, and washed their feet Himself (Jn. 13:4-5). He taught them an unforgettable lesson. When He finished, He said, in effect, "You're to love one another as I have loved you" (v. 15). How did He show His love for them? Not with an emotional attachment. Probably the only emotion He had was disgust because the disciples were full of selfishness and pride. He showed them His love by meeting their need. Likewise, we should meet the needs of others.

We should meet other people's needs spontaneously and involuntarily. Our love should be like a reflex from a humble heart. That kind of heart will always manifest itself. Having a humble heart doesn't mean walking around in ragged clothes and saying, "I'm a worm. " That's a false form of pride; it's the beguiling humility of Colossians 2:18. A truly humble person doesn't articulate his humility.

A humble person acts in service to those in need. He puts others before himself, and shows it with love in action. First John 3:17 says, "But whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" A person with the love of God will meet needs. Biblical love is not an emotion; it is service to someone in need. If you say you are a Christian, yet don't love your brother, then you are a liar. A true Christian has God's love in him.

Love in Action

Let me share with you a letter that I received that talks about love serving people's needs: "Dear Pastor John: Some time ago my husband and I had the opportunity to visit Grace Community Church and I want to tell you what your church is like from a visitor's point of view. Our church is large, too, and our motto is, "The church is where love is. " I have never felt more welcome anywhere than I did at Grace Church. The people were terrific. They treated us like royalty. One gentleman gave me an early morning tour of Grace Church. During the break between the first and second services, I talked with another man for a while. He asked me if I would like a tape from that morning's service. I said yes! A few weeks later, I received not just one tape, but the whole series on Jesus' Teaching on Divorce. Many of my friends have listened to that series and had many questions answered for them. I just wanted to let you know how wonderful your congregation is. "

That's wonderful, isn't it? I know the people she is talking about. The person that gave her a tour didn't really have the time to do that because he had many other responsibilities. The person who sent her the tapes didn't really have the money to do it, but that's how love acts. Love flows from a humble heart. It seeks the comfort and joy of others, not one's self. That has always been true of Grace Church. I pray that it will always be that way--that we will always have an attitude of selfless

love that flows out of a humble heart.

Another spiritual attitude that the people of a church must have is. . .

D. Unity

I've always been very concerned about unity. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:21 that all Christians would be one just as He and the Father are one, so that the world would know He was sent by the Father. Jesus always answers my prayers; I'd like to answer His, wouldn't you? He prayed that we would be unified. John 17:21 basically refers to the unity of believers as a result of salvation. However, Jesus also wants us to have unity in the life and purpose of the church. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesians to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). He didn't tell them to generate unity; they already had it. They were to maintain the unity God already gave them.

1. THE PRIVATION OF UNITY

Unity is an important part of church life. That's why Satan constantly attacks it. Have you ever noticed how many churches split? Some time ago a woman came to me at a camp, saying, "Please, I have to talk to you." We sat down and talked for a while, and she began by saying, "The church I go to is splitting." I asked, "Why?" She said, "I don't know. We can't figure it out. There's so much division and so many personality clashes that we don't really know anymore why we're splitting. What can I do?" I told her to be a peacemaker, and to do anything she could to prevent the split for the sake of the testimony of Jesus Christ. She said, "Some people think it's God's will for the church to split." I told her, "God doesn't will for that kind of thing to happen." Then I asked her, "Do you all agree on what the Bible teaches?" She said, "Yes; we all agree with each other about the Bible. It's just that there are many personality conflicts." That is tragic.

2. THE PRESERVATION OF UNITY

a. Exemplified

Some time ago, my wife and I went to a Bible conference and had the opportunity to talk with the daughter of Dr. Criswell, who pastors the First Baptist Church of Dallas. She told us, "Dad once had a man on his church staff who tried to split our church. He was very torn about that. One Sunday he became so concerned about it that he called a construction company and said, "Before next Sunday, I want kneeling benches installed in every pew in this church." By next Sunday, every pew had kneeling benches. (They're still there today.) When everybody came into the church, he said, "By the grace of God, in the last seventy years or so there has never been a split in this church, and there never will be." Then he told the entire congregation to kneel on the kneeling benches in prayer. God healed the rifts that had been developing in the congregation.

Unity brings God glory. It honors His name. I believe that Satan is incessantly trying to divide churches. I thank God and praise Him that Grace Church has never experienced a split. There have been people who wanted to leave because some little thing didn't happen the way they wanted it to. Even if they were right, humility and love don't act to bring about division. Everybody should have a desire for unity in the oneness of the Spirit. We should all endeavor to have unity in our hearts. Satan wants to shred us apart. He always tries to make someone unhappy enough to start a faction.

I'm grateful to God for the sweet unity there is among the staff of Grace Church. We always watch out though, because we know that Satan wants to sow discord. Every once in a while someone will

want to disrupt the unity at our church. So we always pray and ask God, "Give us a congregation full of peacemakers that want to maintain unity and not sow discord. " Even if the person sowing the discord is right over some trivial matter, he should say, "God, You and I know that I'm right, but I'm going to set that aside and seek unity. "

b. Exhorted

Nobody is perfect--there are always going to be little things that people disagree about.

Nevertheless, we should always get on our knees together and seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). That was the desire of the New Testament writers. Paul poured his heart out to the Corinthians and said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1:10-11). He couldn't stand to see the division among the Corinthians. He added in verse 13, "Is Christ divided? . . ." In other words, he was saying, "Christ is not divided!" In Philippians 1:27 Paul told the Philippians that they should be "striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Do you see the attitudes mentioned above in your life? Is your life characterized by obedience? Are you progressing in maturity and becoming more sanctified as you hear the Word and apply it? Do you see yourself growing in such a way that as you get older, you will reach the peak of dedication in your spiritual life? Do you have an attitude of humility? Are you meeting other people's needs with loving action that comes from a humble heart? Do you truly seek to make peace and maintain the unity of the Spirit? We should seek all of those things in our lives. That is God's will for us.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Where does the life of a church come from?
2. What happens when a church is reorganized but the attitudes of its people aren't worked on?
3. What happens when right spiritual attitudes are present in a church? Why?
4. What is wrong with merely telling the people of a church how to behave? What should be the emphasis of a ministry?
5. Define obedience. Why should we live obedient lives?
6. What often happens when a Christian is confronted about his sin? Give an example.
7. What should be true about older people who have been Christians for many years? Why?
8. Why do some believers stop serving Christ?
9. Did God need us to become saved in order for His work to go on? Support your answer.
10. What has God called Christians to? What does a man deny when he follows Christ (Mt. 10:38-

- 39)? According to Philippians 2:3-4, how are Christians to apply humility?
11. Explain the perspective a Christian should have of himself.
 12. What are some examples of what a humble Christian will do for another Christian?
 13. Describe the kind of love that exists in the world.
 14. What is biblical love? Support your answer.
 15. What kind of person can show true biblical love? What kind of person can't? Why?
 16. Who is your neighbor, and how are you to show your love for him?
 17. How should we meet other people's needs? What should our love be like?
 18. Why did Jesus pray to the Father for all Christians to be unified (Jn. 17:21)? What does Ephesians 4:3 say about the unity of believers?
 19. What does unity among believers do for God? If a believer rightly disagrees with other believers about a trivial matter, what should he do?
 20. What did Paul exhort the Corinthian believers to do, according to 1 Cor. 1:10-11?

Pondering the Principles

1. One of the important spiritual attitudes a Christian must have in his heart is obedience. Read John 14:15, 23. How are we to show our love for God? What will happen to the man who keeps God's commandments? What does Jesus call those who obey His commands (Jn. 15:14)? According to Ephesians 2:10, what were we created to do? Read 1 John 2:3-6. What does verse 4 say about those who do not keep God's commandments? What does verse 5 say about those who do? How are we to walk, according to verse 6? When a person asks Christ to come into his life, he is submitting himself to the lordship of Christ. Examine your life right now and make sure that you are living in total submission to Christ's lordship.
2. God commands Christians to be humble. Read Romans 12:3, 10 and Philippians 2:3-5. How are you to view yourself? How are you to view others? Do you find yourself hoping to receive recognition and praise when you do acts of service in your church? Read Philippians 3:4-9 and Galatians 6:14, and explain what Paul says about pride in those passages.
3. A Christian is to show his love for others through actions. Do you know any people in your church who have needs? Are you willing to take the time to meet any of those needs? Whether you really care about your brothers and sisters in Christ is revealed by how willing you are to meet their needs

(Js. 2:15-17). If you know someone in your church who has a need, then do whatever you can this week to meet that need. Make a habit of meeting other people's needs instead of waiting for others to meet those needs.

4. Unity in a church brings God glory. Do you seek to maintain unity in your church? Are there people in your church whom you avoid because of personality conflicts? How do you think God feels about people who are divided over insignificant things? What would unbelievers think if they saw disunity in your church? If you have a grudge against anyone in your church, pray to God and ask Him to give you a forgiving heart. Tell that person that you desire to put aside your grudge and "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

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