

Independent or Interdependent

Romans 8:12-16 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

We have not received the spirit of bondage, but rather the Spirit of adoption. We are no longer slaves to sin, but instead we have been adopted into the family of God. We are His children.

That means that we are a family. As each of us have been adopted, we are now brothers and sisters, which is what we often call each other around the church. When you realise that the other people in the Church are your family, then that changes your relationship with them. You are no longer people who just have something in common, but rather you are brothers and sisters. You are of one blood, the blood of Jesus Christ.

This change of relationship into one of a family brings a lot of benefits to you, but also brings obligations to you.

I was thinking that, in our society, independence is valued, or at least promoted as something desirable. To be independent means you don't have to rely on someone else for support, that you are able to look after yourself, that you have sufficient means for your needs. They even advertise it with new housing units, and especially Nursing Home Units – "Independent Living at its finest", or something like that.

The thing is, independence is not always the best thing. How many quotes do you want me to give you – "No man is an island" Instead of giving you quotes, I will give you scripture:

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

We are members one of another. That means we are not independent, but rather interdependent.

Some definitions of interdependent:

Interdependence is a dynamic of being mutually and physically responsible to and sharing a common set of principles with others. ...

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdependent

mutually dependent

wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

In the church, just like in any other family, we are not independent, but instead we are mutually dependant on each other. The trouble is, in our culture and society we have not learned much about being an interdependent family. I come from an English family, with a distant father. If it wasn't for my wife, I would probably be distant from my children. I never learned how to be close to my family when I was growing up, and I am thankful my wife shows me how to do that, even if I fall down sometimes and still need work on it.

What are our expectations of a family? You don't have to live each other's lives, or be in each other's pockets, to be a close family. What you do need is an acceptance, and a feeling of mutual belonging.

The Church is a "sanctuary" - a safe place, where you can be yourself and still be accepted. You don't have to pretend that you are something you're not to be loved. That is how it is with a family. They know you, with all your weaknesses, failings, and annoying habits, and yet you are still part of the family. The Bible calls us the family of God, and in a family people are still part of it regardless of their issues, or weaknesses. The family knows them as they really are, but still loves them anyway. Every family has the cousin with the really annoying habits. Every family has an uncle who tells all these lame jokes. Every family has a wacko auntie that is way out there.

Romans 14:10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The world's idea of love is to love others when they meet your approval. You love them because of their personality, their looks, their behaviour, their character. Something about them pleases you. That is not how it is in God's kingdom. God's idea of love is to love others because they are valuable. In the family of God we accept people as they are. There is a big difference between "acceptance" and "approval". When you accept someone it doesn't mean you are agreeing with them on everything. It means you recognise they are valuable, and every person here is valuable.

It seems to me that society has a warped idea of closeness. Connecting with others by email or Facebook is not closeness. It is very superficial. For there to be

a true close relationship, you have to know the truth about that person. Then putting up the wall of a computer monitor, and only just “leaking” you what they want you to know is not true closeness. For a family to have a close relationship requires effort, sacrifice, and the will to do it.

While I am on the subject, some other practical things:

1. RSVP by the date you are asked to
2. If you are not able to attend, let them know in plenty of time. Don't just not turn up
3. If you are coming, tell them you are coming
4. Not everyone can be invited to every thing, so choose not to be offended if you are not invited
5. Don't show partiality to those you do invite – one rule for one and a different rule for another

Let's see what the Bible says about the last days:

Matthew 24:8-10 **All these are the beginning of sorrows. (9) "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (10) And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.**

But this is how it should be in the church:

Romans 14:13 **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.**

1 Corinthians 12:25 **that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.**

Galatians 5:13 **For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.**

Galatians 6:2 **Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

Ephesians 4:1-2 **I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, (2) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,**

Ephesians 4:32 **And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

Ephesians 5:21 **submitting to one another in the fear of God.**

Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1 Timothy 5:21 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.

James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

John 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

We are not staying the same, but we can rejoice as we overcome our weaknesses and have victory in the power of Jesus.

I am going to make an effort to be more open in my respect and love for people in the church, by actually choosing to show love to them in my actions.

Will you make that same commitment, to show love one for another. We can only control our own behaviour, so don't let the behaviour of others decide your actions.

If we can just get our love for one another right, then we will see the love of God shed abroad through us to others. Can you feel the revival that is right here?

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.