

11.9.23 / Identity and Community / 1 Thes 4:10

Prayer / God's Word is infallible / inspired / authoritative

(1 Thes) Speaks to our identity, our sexual desires, purpose, our understanding of community

In **this** community - which we refer to as the Covenant church family, we believe that we are each children of God – subjects of King Jesus

That makes our identity both **singular** and **plural**.

I am a child of God. So is _____ and _____ ... so that means

We are His, His people, who exist for His kingdom and His glory.

We are brothers and sisters (x19) in Christ; we are heirs, we are God's family... **we**

1 Thes 4:9-10

Part of our Identity is family who loves each other. **So what does it look like/mean to live more fully into this family metaphor?**

1 Thes 5:13b-15

Peace, warn (comes from care and concern) encourage, help, patient, do good....

Col 3:12. (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness).

This is what it means to love each other as family.

Paul tells Thessalonians – you're doing this well; do so **more & more**

Love each other as brothers and sisters.

Family – beautiful and distracting metaphor

- Beautiful – gives **snapshot of wholeness** – care & support of parent, understanding & comfort of siblings
- Distracting – **reminder of brokenness** – failure & mistreatment in family relationships causes deep wounds
- Reality of **connection & equal footing** (Curtis & Ginger)

God's family – all of this wrapped up in sacrificial love

Connection (Holy Spirit) / Equal footing (redemption)

We are **following** and **fueled** by **Jesus** example and redemption

In God's family we're not community in the sense that we're a bunch of people heading in the same general direction. **(Graphic 1)**

We're family in that we're holding on to and reaching out to each other. **(Graphic 2)** following Jesus and fueled by Jesus.

Holy Kiss – **1 Thes 5:26** – Exactly what it was is unclear (cheek?), yet it was a significant symbol of affection, unity and equality.

In Alan Kreider's book: *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*,

- Among immediate family: expression of affection and love

- Amidst society: “a symbol of social stratification and status,” a ritual of hierarch. Depending on rank, people kissed the hem of the emperor’s robe, his knee, or his hand. In other parts of society – one with lower standing would kiss the hand of one with higher standing. Only equals would “kiss on the level”

Add this to this fascinating reality about early church – Only place...

Highest and lowest of society came together

Slave/free, Men/women, Jew/Gentile, ed/uned, Rich/poor

All came together as family – inexplicable connection, equal footing, wrapped in sacrificial love for one another. It wasn’t perfect. But it was family.

The Holy Kiss (shared by different members) was a radically counter cultural symbol of a radically counter cultural family. **And the world around noticed...**

Now... when people **this different** unite, there are going to be challenges.

Friction Gifts - [1 Thes 5:13b-15](#) – Differences offer an opportunity to show - Peace, warn (come from care and concern) encourage, help, patient.... Col 3:16 – *bear with...*

Why? Romans 12:4, 5 – belong to each other – **your** spiritual growth/health is **my** business and vice-versa.

[1 Thes 4:9-10](#) – brothers... love each other – as you are already doing, now do so more and more.

(picture video) [See pictures & hear stories – name comment](#)

Annie has a reoccurring doctor’s appointment in Indianapolis for a season. She is not comfortable driving in Indy and uncertain as to whether she’ll feel up to driving at all directly following each appointment. Jared and Diane, two members of her small group, agree to drive her to and from her doctor’s appointments. **Bro & Sis, keep loving each other like this more and more.**

Nora learns of Linda’s upcoming surgery and organizes a gathering of several church family members to come around and pray for Linda before she leaves for surgery (20 people).

Dave and Sandy meet a couple at church who are new to town. They sense a hunger for Jesus in this couple and they invite them to dinner so that they can get to know them better.

Abby and Margie are good friends. Margie’s sight is failing and she is struggling to see well enough to read her devotional each morning. Abby offers to call Margie every morning at a set time and read the devotional to her over the phone – for years.

Carrie has a lot to navigate in life as she cares for her special needs child. However, when a family member is having a difficult time in life, Carrie is quick to prepare and deliver a meal for them.

Bill cares faithfully for his wife, Melanie, in the midst of her slipping further and further into dementia. Several couples from their small group come alongside them by bringing them a meals regularly and coming over to help Bill with different tasks as he cares for Melanie.

Penny has built a relationship with Sue over the years as Sue's health progressively limits her. Sue is now bed ridden. She comments to Penny one day that she misses looking at the beautiful trees outside her window. Penny goes out and takes a picture of those trees, has it enlarged and affixes that picture to the ceiling above Sue's bed so that she can look at it all the time.

Frank is retired. He organizes his schedule every week so he can offer practical help to two adults with disabilities.

Erin hears of someone who encounters an unexpected financial hardship and anonymously donates a significant financial gift to that person in hardship. (times many)

Mary's vision impairment restricts her from serving others in many ways. She hears of a family in crisis and offers the one thing she says she could consistently do for them – that family's laundry – which she does every week for two years.

[1 Thes 4:9-10](#) – love more and more

We have been united as a family through Jesus' death & resurrection. Brothers and Sisters **in Christ**. He died for us – and opened the way for us to enter His peace (his family) – not just **me** with Him but **us** with Him... forever.

Communion: This is the beautiful truth that Jesus was pointing to when He met with His disciples at what we call the Last Supper.

Bread & Prayer for peace (sit) / Cup & prayer forgiveness (sit)