

BACK TO



PART 1: A LOVING COMMUNITY

Back to the Basics

September 12, 19, 26, October 3, & 10

“Loving community” – The love of God, the Word of God, & the family of God

Dear Faith Bible Church,

As we approach our 30th anniversary as a church, we want to revisit the core values and commitments that we see in God’s Word that are the foundation of who we are as a church. The result of these core values and commitments is our passion statement: “We aim to be a loving community making disciples of Jesus Christ.” We will spend five weeks in the fall looking at values and truths that shape what it means to be a “loving community.” Our prayer is that as we study these things, hear preaching on these values, and talk about them in our discipling groups and families, we will be further formed into the image of Christ as a church.

In January we will spend five weeks looking further at our values, focusing further on the truths and values that shape our activity of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Between *Back to the Basics* part 1 and part 2 we will study and hear preaching on Malachi, which has the theme of true instruction leads to a pure heart and pure worship. In February we will begin a series on the book of 1 John, which will, we pray, further shape our fellowship with God and our love for one another.

We encourage you to use this growth guide each week to prepare for our Lord’s day gathering. If you do the study the week before the dates listed on each lesson, you will be better prepared to hear the sermon preached on Sunday morning, which will be over the same topic. Then, the week after you have heard the sermon hopefully your growth group or discipling group will be able to meet to talk about what you have learned through the growth guide and the sermon and how you are applying it to your life!

Here is the outline of what we will be looking at in this growth guide:

- The love of God: God loves us, we love God. This is why we exist as God’s people.
- The Word of God: our authority, our sufficiency. Therefore, we are committed to expository preaching and the centrality of the Word in all we do.
- The family of God: Public ministry at the Lord’s day gathering. Therefore, we gather weekly for God-centered worship.
- The family of God: Elders & members work together to know Christ and show Christ. what is my fit? Every member is a worshipper, minister, and a missionary.
- The family of God: Personal ministry throughout the week. We seek to live out our discipling convictions – know, speak, live – to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We aim to be a loving community with Christ at the center.

May Christ be honored and praised as we grow together as a loving community that reflects the loving community that God is!

Nathan, for the FBC elders and the growth guide editing team (Tom Dudenhofer, Howard Amland, Lana Pustovit, Jenni Rainbow, Marty Tornquist, Seth Weber)

“Loving Community” – The Love of God

September 12-18

Back to the Basics

As we embark on this “Back to the Basics” series, we want to work through our church’s distinctives and values, which can be summarized in our passion statement. These are the core things that we want to always define who we are and what we do. Being convinced of and reminded of these things will help us to be united and encouraged in the mission God has given us. We summarize this mission with the passion statement, “We aim to be a loving community making disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Over the next five weeks we want to explore that phrase “loving community.” What is the foundation of our loving community? What is the life of our loving community? We will be looking at the love of God, which is the basis for all that we are and do. Then we will examine the word of God through which God reveals Himself and teaches us how to love Him and love each other. Finally, we will study the family of God, the church, and what God calls us to be and do. This week we turn to the love of God.

Biblical Love Defined

Biblical love is a commitment to do what is best for someone else regardless of the cost to yourself. In God’s case, it is His commitment to share Himself with His people. 1 John 4:8-10 shows us what love is:

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. [9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Let us exult in His love which is higher than the heavens and deeper than the deepest sea!

John 17:24

1. When did God the Father love God the Son?

The fact that the Father, the Son and the Spirit have always, for all of eternity, been loving each other has huge implications for our understanding of God’s nature. How does knowing this about God give you confidence in God’s desire to be in a loving relationship with His people who are in Christ?

Ephesians 1:3-6

2. When did He choose to love those He would later redeem through Christ’s death on the cross? What do you learn from these verses in Ephesians?

Genesis 1:26-31

3. How do you see God's love being expressed at creation, especially towards Adam and Eve?

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

4. We fast forward in the Biblical story to Abraham and the nation of Israel. What do we learn here about why God set His love on Israel?

Romans 5:6-8, Ephesians 2:4-7, 1 John 4:7-12

5. Hopefully you are seeing a theme emerging here. God loves because He is love. He does not love His people on the basis of their merit, but rather because of His mercy. What do you learn in these verses about how God has shown His love to His people through Christ? What do you learn about the love of God?

Loving Community

Jerry Bridges in his book True Community talks about four meanings of the word fellowship (*koinonia* in the Greek): relationship, partnership, communion and sharing material possessions. The first meaning is participation in a relationship. Bridges explains this in the quote below.

"Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship - a relationship that consisted of sharing together the very life of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ, they were formed into a spiritually organic community. They were living stones being built into a spiritual house (see 1 Peter 2:5), fellow members of the body of Christ. As William Hendrickson said, "Koinonia, then, is basically a community-relationship." It is not primarily an activity; it is a relationship." True Community, 2-3

The basis of our loving community is how we share now in the life of God through our union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This relationship with God leads to a partnership with God as His children and servants. These are the two aspects of sharing together - relationship and partnership. The third and fourth aspects of fellowship are sharing with one another spiritually and physically. Bridges says, "The first two are dimensions of koinonia as sharing together, the second two as sharing with one another. It is because we share together a common life in Christ that we are called on to share with one another whatever we have, both spiritual and material resources." True Community, 8

Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:4-6, Colossians 3:3-4

6. What do these verses teach you about our vital union with Christ? What does it mean that we are “in Christ”?

Discussion Question

7. What is most amazing to you about the love of God? Why is it important to understand the unconditional nature of God’s love?

Application Question

8. Consider John 13:34-35. What does this mean for how we are to love each other now in the church? What are some specific ways you can live this out?

Prayer Requests

“Loving Community” – The Word of God

September 19-25

The Word of God

Loving relationships are based on mutual **revelation**. We can only love someone as well as we know them. To love God, and to experience His love, we need to read, study and understand His Word. God's people have always thrived when they listened to God's Word and believed Him. With Adam & Eve, Noah, and Abraham we see that God blessed each of them by speaking to them and helping them to know Him and walk with Him. Israel thrived when they were hearing the Word of God and having their hearts changed by God's Word.

At Faith Bible church, one of our distinctives is “expositional preaching.” We say, “A consistent commitment to expository preaching provides a foundation for all that happens at FBC. The congregation has a deep hunger for the Word of God, greatly desiring to understand and apply biblical truth.” Indeed, in our Sunday gathering and every other gathering there is a commitment to seeking to hear God's Word together and respond together to Him. Let's turn now to see what we see in the Bible about God's Word and the very vital role it plays in our loving community.

Psalm 1:1-3, Jeremiah 17:5-8

1. The “Law” here refers to God's Word to His people, not just the Old Testament commandments. How does Psalm 1 describe what the blessed person does? What is the result?

How does Jeremiah 17 describe what the blessed person does? What is the result?

Seeing the similar result in both passages, how would you summarize the relationship between delighting in the law of the Lord and trusting in the Lord?

Psalm 19:7-14

2. These verses refer to God's Word in different ways.

What words are used to describe God's Word?

What does the Word of God do according to this Psalm?

Psalm 119:9-16

3. What do you see here about what the Word of God does in the life of the people of God?

Deuteronomy 17:18-20

4. What was the king in Israel supposed to do to keep His relationship with God and His leadership of Israel good? (“This law” is referring to the first five books of the Bible, which is all they had at that time as God’s written Word.)

Joshua 1:8

5. What was Joshua supposed to do with the Book of the Law (Moses’ five books) and why?

1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 3:15-16

6. What does this show us about how we should view what Paul and other New Testament authors have written?

2 Timothy 3:14-17

7. What do you see about the Word of God here? Make a list of the things that the Bible does and is.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

8. What is the command Paul gives Timothy here?

How is preaching the Bible’s message (reading the Bible, explaining it, and applying it) necessary in order for us to do what Paul is telling Timothy here?

Expository Preaching

When we say “expository preaching” we are talking about preaching that faithfully exposes the meaning of the text through careful study of the context in the Bible and through careful study of the grammatical, literary and historical features of the text. You could summarize expository preaching by saying that you must:

- Read the Bible
- Explain it
- Apply it

John MacArthur further defines expository preaching this way in his book Preaching: “The message finds its sole source in Scripture. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis (this is a word describing a thorough study of the text including its grammar, literature and history for the purpose of uncovering the Biblical author’s original intent). The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.”

2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Corinthians 2:11-14, John 16:12-15, James 1:22-25

9. These texts help us to see the necessary ingredients for “expository listening” or listening that exposes the meaning of God’s word and faithfully applies it. If expository preaching reads the Word, explains the Word and applies the Word, expository listening hears the Word, understands the Word, and does the Word. What do you learn from these texts about how we should listen to God’s Word? What is our part and what does the Holy Spirit do?

Here is a good additional resource from Tim Challies on how to be a good listener:
<https://www.challies.com/christian-living/being-a-diligent-listener>

Discussion Questions

10. What is the difference between expository preaching and non-expository preaching? How can you be a discerning listener?

11. What can you do to be a good, expository listener? In other words, what can you do to faithfully seek to hear the Word of God in its context and to understand it well as you listen to a sermon? What kind of preparation before is helpful?

12. Why is God's Word central to all that we do as a church seeking to be a loving community?

Application Question

13. What can you do to more faithfully hear God's Word and be changed by Him through His Word? Try to think of an answer beyond "Read the Bible more." Think more specifically and tangibly about what you can do in your day-to-day life or on a week by week basis to more faithfully hear God's Word.

Prayer Requests

“Loving Community” – The Family of God

The Lord’s Day Gathering - Public Ministry

September 26-October 2

The Family of God

We have seen how the love of God and the Word of God are the foundations for our loving community. Now we will spend three weeks thinking about the family of God that we are in Christ. What is our focus as we gather? Why do we gather together on Sunday morning? What are the roles of elders and members in the family? How do we go about loving each other in this community? What are our convictions about how we disciple each other? These are the things we will be looking at during the next three weeks. Our goal is to focus on these basics so that we can, by God’s grace, excel still more in being and doing what Christ is calling us to be and do as His body!

This week’s lesson is focused on the Lord’s Day Gathering and the God-Centered Worship of that gathering. Our distinctive for God-centered worship reads like this: “Leading believers in a God-centered worship experience is a weekly priority at FBC. With an emphasis on involvement and participation, the Lord is lifted up through blended styles of music.”

In this lesson we will address the questions, “What is the church?” and “What are we meant to do together?”

Acts 2:42-47

1. Earlier in Acts 2 we see a description of the day of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit was sent and about 3,000 people repented and were baptized. What do you see in this passage that the people who were identified with Christ as His followers were committed to doing together?

Church

In Acts 13:1, 16:5, and Ephesians 1:22 we see that the people who had received the Holy Spirit were called the “church.” This word “church” is the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*. This word means a gathering or assembly. The common usage of this word would have been to refer to a group of people gathered for a specific purpose in a city. It is defined by the activity of gathering together. The meaning of the word for church is gathering. The Lord’s day gathering of God’s people is vital and essential to who we are and what we are. Fundamentally we are a gathering together of God’s people from the nations. To claim to be part of Christ’s church, Christ’s gathering, without being willing to physically gather with God’s people in a local church is a contradiction.

John 20:1, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2

2. We see in these verses that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, Sunday. The first Christians after the coming of the Holy Spirit started meeting together regularly on Sunday, the day the Lord rose from the dead. The principles that God had set out for His people for the Sabbath were lived out by the early church on Sunday. What principles do you see in these verses related to the need to gather together with the church on Sunday?

1 Timothy 3:14-15

3. We see that Paul is giving Timothy instructions so that they will know how to behave in the church. He gives him principles about their prayers, the involvement of women, and the qualifications of leaders in the church. How does all of the instruction Paul gives show the importance of the Lord's day gathering? What are some of his concerns for their gatherings?

Hebrews 10:24-25

4. Which purposes for gathering together do you see here in this passage?

How does this passage and its context in Hebrews (a book about the need to continue trusting in Jesus, the only Savior, in the midst of difficulty) help us to see the importance of gathering together?

Sunday gathering

Every gathering of Christians together has value, but the Sunday gathering has a unique role of equipping all of the members of the church for their private ministry from house to house. The way we approach God's Word and worship God on Sunday in our gathering sets the stage for all other worship and ministry to one another throughout the week. We are equipped for all other ministry we do to each other through the Sunday gathering.

Discussion Question

5. How does the Sunday gathering equip you for your other ministries throughout the week? How does it function as the standard and anchor for the rest of our lives as believers?

Application Question

6. How can you better prepare for the Lord's day gathering? What specific steps can you take?
7. How can you most fully participate in the Lord's day gathering? What are you committed to doing?

Prayer Requests

“Loving Community” – The Family of God pt.2

Members, Elders, Deacons

October 3-9

The Family of God

God is making a people for Himself by building His church, His family. This is where God is making His glory known on the earth and is how He is carrying out His amazing and wonderful purposes! It is important to understand the roles and functions God has given to His family, the church. The first and most important person in the church is Christ Jesus! He is the head of the body, the Savior and Lord of the church. Secondly, everyone who is in Christ is a member of His body and should be a member in a particular local church. Each member of the church is a worshipper, minister and missionary (using the term missionary in a broader sense to refer to someone who is on mission with Christ seeking to make new disciples). Finally, some of those members need to serve as elders (or pastors or shepherds – these titles can be used interchangeably) and deacons. Elders and deacons are not more valuable or important than the other members of the church, but they have a unique role that needs to be exercised. We will look at Christ’s role in the church, the role of all the members of the church, and the role of elders and deacons.

Christ, the Lord of the Church

Colossians 1:13-20, Matthew 16:18

1. What do you learn from these verses about Christ and His role in the church and relationship to the church?

Church Membership

Although the phrase “church membership” does not exactly appear in the New Testament, it is implied through what church leaders are called to do and through what church members are called to do. We define church membership as *a mutually recognized commitment between the members of one particular local church*. This is a commitment to be shepherded by the elders of the church and to serve or minister to other members of the church. This mutually recognized commitment is necessary because of the nature of what church members and church leaders are called to do as the household of God. In the following questions we will explore these responsibilities and commitments and hopefully see how they necessitate membership in one particular local church. At Faith Bible Church, you can pursue being a member by doing the membership class, filling out the request for membership form, and meeting with one of the elders for a new member interview.

Church Members

1 Timothy 3:14-15, Ephesians 2:18-22

2. To understand the concept of church members, first we need to look at what the church is. What do these verses tell us about the church?

How do these realities about what the church is connect to the concept of church members?

Ephesians 4:11-16

3. According to Ephesians 4:12, whose job is it to do the work of ministry?

What is that work of ministry that all of the members of the church are called to?

What is the role of the people listed in Ephesians 4:11 (their role is described in 4:12)?

1 Peter 2:9-10

4. The identity and purpose of the church is beautifully described here. When we understand this identity and purpose we can understand why a mutually recognized commitment to one another is necessary and important. What do these verses say about the identity and the purpose of the church?

Elders

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:1-3, Titus 1:9

5. What do you learn from these verses about the job that God has given to the elders in the church?

What are the implications regarding official church membership (a mutually recognized commitment to belong to one particular local church) based on the job God has given to elders in the church? In other words, why is a mutually recognized commitment necessary so that these functions that elders are supposed to do can happen?

Matthew 18:15-17

6. The primary function of being a member of a local church is to pursue that work of ministry to build up other believers as we saw in Ephesians 4:11-16. However, another important reason for belonging to one particular church is so that Christ might use that church to help you to persevere in the faith all the way to the end of your life. Often we all need correction and confrontation so that we might continue following Christ in faith and repentance. The process being described here in Matthew 18 is what we call “church discipline”. It is for the purpose of pursuing an unrepentant person so that they might repent and be restored.

What does it look like during step one and two of the church discipline process? Who should be involved in these steps of loving, humble pursuit of the repentance of another member?

What implications does this process have for why church membership is important?

1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9

7. What are the qualifications for someone who is an elder (overseer, pastor, and shepherd are all terms that are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to the role of elder) in the church?

Why is it important that the elders in a church be carefully examined and chosen based on these qualifications?

Deacons

Acts 6:1-6, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

8. The passage in Acts describes the first instance of an official deacon-type role and the 1 Timothy passage describes the qualifications of a deacon. From these two passages, how would you describe the purpose and importance of the role of deacons?

Discussion Questions

9. Discuss the concept of official local church membership (a mutually recognized commitment to one particular local church). Why is it important to belong to one particular local church?

10. Every member of the church is a worshipper, minister and missionary. Why are these identities important to the carrying out of the mission of the church?

Application Question

11. How do you want to grow in participating in the work of ministry that God has given you as a member of this local church? Which aspects of your ministry do you want to improve upon?

Prayer Requests

“Loving Community” – The Family of God pt.3

Personal Ministry

October 10-16

The Family of God

The church is a loving community with Christ at the center. We have been given the command to love one another as He has loved us. We have also been told that He is making each of us into His image as we know Him and grow in Him. We are given many commands that we are to fulfill with one another in order that we might love one another as Christ has loved us. This process of each of us becoming like Christ could be called “discipleship”. This is the life-long process of sanctification that happens as we trust in Christ, submit to Him as Lord and grow in His grace. The process of each of us helping each other to become like Christ could be called “discipling” – we are discipling each other so that each of us might live under Christ’s Lordship by His grace.

Know, Speak, Live

We are using three words to summarize our convictions and pursuits as we disciple one another – know, speak, and live. We must **know** each other in the context of loving relationships so that we can **speak** the truth of Christ to each other and thus help each other to **live** as disciples of Christ. In your role as a minister, as a member of this local church, we want to encourage you to think about how you can be knowing others and be known by them so that you can speak the truth of Christ to each other in order that you might live under the Lordship of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-16

1. Ephesians 4:11 describes the offices or functions that God has given to the church to equip or train the church for the work of ministry. These functions are primarily carried out through the work of the elders of the church as they teach and shepherd the church with the Word of God that the apostles and prophets have given us. Evangelists lead and equip in the work of preaching the gospel to the world and establishing new churches among those who begin following Christ. The purpose of that equipping and training from evangelists, pastors and teachers is that the whole church might do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12) to build up the body of Christ. What is the goal of that work of ministry according to Ephesians 4:13?

Know

2. Consider Ephesians 4:13 and the things that we are to seek to attain. Think about the analogy of a band conductor or soccer coach. He or she needs to first know the skills and qualities that the

musician or athlete is pursuing. Then, he or she must know the musician or athlete in relation to those skills and qualities so that he or she can effectively “minister” to the musician or athlete and help them to grow in those skills and qualities. Why is it vital that we know each other as we strive to minister to one another? How does knowing one another help us to fulfill the ministry described in Ephesians 4:12-13?

Hebrews 3:12-14, Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 18:15-17, Hebrews 10:24-25

3. What kinds of one another ministry are being described in these passages?

Matthew 18:15-17

Galatians 6:1-2

Hebrews 3:12-14

Hebrews 10:24-25

Why is it essential to know one another so that you might do the ministry described in these passages?

Speak

Ephesians 4:15-16, Colossians 1:28-29, Colossians 3:16

4. What are we to speak or proclaim to one another according to these verses?

Ephesians 4:15-16

Colossians 1:28-29

Colossians 3:16

5. Thinking about these three passages, what are some things that must be happening in your life so that you can be speaking the truth of Christ to others?

Live

Ephesians 4:17-24

6. The result of the ministry of all of the members of the body of Christ to one another as described in 4:12-16 is spelled out here in this passage and in the rest of the book of Ephesians. How would you summarize the kind of living that we are to pursue according to this passage?
7. Considering Ephesians 4:21-24, what are some ways that we can help each other to do the things that are described here in the life of a disciple of Christ?

Colossians 3:17, Ephesians 3:20-21

8. How do these passages describe the goal or result of our living as disciples of Christ?

Discussion Questions

9. Do you think that the words “know, speak, live” help you to remember some of the key aspects of discipling one another or ministering to one another? Why or why not?

10. Which of these three convictions needs the most work in your personal ministry to others in the church, your home or your world?

11. Which of these three convictions is the strongest in your discipling group? Why do you think that is the case?

Which one needs the most work in your discipling group? Why?

Application Questions

12. Which of these convictions do you want to focus on living out in your discipling group? In your family?

13. What steps can you take to grow in living out that conviction in those contexts?

Prayer Requests



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 440 W. Cora, Spokane, WA 99205

 509.326.9455

 fbchurch.org