

**Series:** Debunking Lies that Disrupt Intergenerational Community

**Sermon Text:** Acts 2:42-47, Matthew 10:35-39 (App to get lesson/slides, ask questions. Color Pg)

The church is diverse in every way imaginable because our unity is based on Christ alone. This series aims to debunk falsehoods we've been raised to believe that disrupt our being a diverse intergenerational community in Christ. Some of these include...

Church is more of a place than a people.	Only blood relatives can be considered family.
Children should be seen and not heard.	It's best to spend time with people my own age.
Older folks can't learn from younger people.	Learning is merely an informational transaction.

In prior lessons, we identified Satan as “*the father of lies*” (cf. John 8:44) who uses various forms of warfare (e.g., spiritual, physical, psychological) to **trick every generation into forgetting what God deems essential**. Because he's been at this a long time, we're all born into sinful traditions of thoughts and behaviors we view as “*normal*” or “*how things should be*.” Participating in Christ's diverse church challenges our norms and creates opportunities to repent and change. Last time, we discussed how “**Church is a family before we're anything else!**” Today, we'll further unpack the term “*family*” in response to some questions we've received by exploring this essential...

**BIG IDEA: We have much to relearn after being born again.**

If you don't know, early churches functioned like families, often meeting in large homes. Let's read a description of that in *Acts 2:42-47* which says: *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with*

*glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* This is the growth plan for God's church--healthy, sacrificial relationships attracting others to Jesus! It sounds like stuff we'd do for blood relatives, not church people. Yet, that's how spiritual rebirth transforms us--the joy of being redeemed into God's family by Christ renews our minds about strangers and even enemies! I wonder, "Has this happened to you yet?" (If so, discuss it with your group!).

The thing is, not everyone will appreciate your new perspectives! Christians can be misunderstood and persecuted for this level of commitment to Christ's commands. Here's an example from one of my favorite church history books, "*2000 Years of Christ's Power* by Nick Needham" (p. 85): "*Another reason for the great unpopularity of Christians was that most people believed them to be guilty of all kinds of evil practices...Some of these accusations arose through a misunderstanding of genuine Christian practices. The accusation of cannibalism, for example, was probably based on the Lord's supper, where Christians spoke of eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood; the accusation of incest arose partly from the fact that Christians called each other 'brother' and 'sister' and 'loved each other'.*" We may shrug off criticisms if they come from strangers, however, "Whose critique can get under your skin?" It's often those we care about most, like close family and friends. That's how we're designed--to be influenced by who and what we love! Satan knows this and will weaponize it to devour our faith! His most effective spiritual attacks come, not from strangers and enemies, but those we love.

Let's read **Matthew 10:35-39** where Jesus attempted to prepare us with some worst-case scenarios: "***I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.***" Yikes, right? You won't see that on Mother's/Father's Day cards! Let's be clear...Jesus' Dad was pro-family, so this isn't about being a neglectful,

dishonoring jerk nor must all Christians endure such painful encounters. This worst-case scenario reveals Christ's desire for us to prioritize love of Him above all. The question is: "*How much pull do your loved ones have, and what would you do if they said to disobey Jesus?*"

Matthew 10 is not hypothetical for me. When I first trusted Christ, and later sensed that God wanted me to pastor, a few close relatives (some were church goers) gave me a seriously hard time and even called our church a cult. Of course, we're free to come and go, we have historically orthodox views, we encourage critical thinking, and we leave room for disagreement ([read this](#) and [these](#)). I know they had my best interest at heart, and some even got on board eventually, but THEIR desire for my life conflicted with what many had confirmed to be Christ's desire. At that point, my identity was wrapped up in them being my people and maybe even idolized my family a bit. Feeling like a disappointment to them made me spiritually unsteady in my first few years. What a great tactic, right? If Satan can't get US to doubt God, the next best thing is to leverage the doubt of loved ones. Their criticisms gnawed at me and made me want to turn back, especially during conflicts with my "new people" that sometimes stemmed from unbiblical habits of mistreating others I had picked up from my biological family.

Anyway, it stunned and refreshed me to find Christ's warning that Satan might, at least temporarily, cause members of ***my own household*** to take ***enemy*** stances against me. Another verse that helped me along those lines was John 15:20 where Jesus said, "*Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*" This verse encourages me to push through times of being misunderstood or persecuted--it suggests that some will see my faith and obey God's Word! Just remember...your biggest critics today, could become your brothers and sisters in Christ tomorrow! Another verse that encourages me is John 14:15-18 where Jesus promised us a helper: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him*

*nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

In closing, let’s circle back to our **BIG IDEA: We have much to relearn after being born again.** How we were raised won’t always align with our new life in Christ, and our bio-families may not like us breaking tradition. They may get jealous of our time spent with the church, question the kind of people we forgive and help, expect us to hate who they hate, or maybe doubt our ability to help other families since they “*know who we really are!*”. Here’s the thing: Our Heavenly Father redeems and even re-parents us in Christ so that our past no longer defines us nor disqualify us from future impact. A final family text that speaks to this besides Acts 2 and Matthew 10 is 1 Peter 2: “*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation...As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” That’s a rather clear message--God wants to be more than an add-on to our lives! We are born again into His new and diverse family that lives by faith, not sight. He wants the people in this room, flawed and imperfect as we are, to become partners who collectively discover His plans and designs for life. Also, He never takes away or asks us to forsake something without somehow providing the good He wants us to have in its place. So, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you don’t have to work through anything alone. Please reach out.

**Sunday to Monday Connection:** Today’s lesson highlights the importance of walking with the Lord, and with an intergenerational family of believers that will in their own way impact our lives. Their encouragement, along with God’s Holy Word and Christ’s indwelling Spirit empowers us to face any and all challenges to becoming a new person in a new faith family that displays the love of Christ to generation after generation.

- **Question:** See takeaways below.
- **Next Step:** Get with someone who’s been a Christian longer than you, and ask them to share how following Christ has challenged and changed them.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

**Takeaways to discuss with your people** (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. What's attractive to you about Acts 2:42-47, and what steps could you take towards that model?
2. What's the most you would sacrifice for a non-relative, and have there been any examples of this in your life that have caused issues for you?
3. How does Matthew 10:35-39 help you see the level of commitment Jesus expects of those who are born again into the family of God? How does this differ from your church experiences?
4. What 'norms' (lies) might you need to unlearn now that you've been born again? Have there been any times where your upbringing has conflicted with your new life in Christ?
5. When are you most tempted to deny or give up on Jesus? Have people you love ever given you a hard time for doing what the Bible clearly says, and if so, how did it impact your faith?
6. What past relationships, experiences, beliefs, or traditions keep you from participating in God's diverse, intergenerational church family?

**Quotes related to this passage:**

**Considerations for discussion leaders:**

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

**Other Articles/Songs/Videos:** Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

**Bibliography** (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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