

June 2007

Relationships and Jesus' Church: An obligation of duty or an essential for life?

After I had been asked for the third time in a little over a week or so if New Life was the church out on Jefferson Pike, I knew that our society has definitely come to define "church" as a building or location. My wind breaker with "New Life" embroidered on the front opened the door to a number of conversations about church and afforded me the opportunity to answer their question with a statement about the nature of the church. I would say something like this, "Yes, the New Life Church meets in the converted barn which is located off Jefferson Pike." When Jesus' Church fails to see herself as He has identified us throughout His Word, everything about our progress in becoming like Him and being a witness to the world, is hindered. A Biblical view of Jesus' Church and a wholehearted response has the possibility of birthing revival in us individually and in His Church corporately. Could holding a higher view of Jesus' Church really spark revival –I do believe that this is part of the answer.

In the besting selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Pastor Rick Warren identifies relationships within Jesus' Church as the #2 purpose for life after relationship with God. I believe that this conclusion is valid based on Jesus' statement from Matt. 22:37-40, that the 2nd greatest commandment is tied intrinsically to the first to love God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind. Jesus teaches us that loving God and loving our neighbor go "hand-in-hand" and cannot be separated,

*"The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people.
You've got to love both." 1 John 4:20*

The following is a review of the seven days of teaching (from *The Purpose Driven Life*) about relationships within Jesus' Church:

1. **You were formed for God's family** (page 117-122)

"God wants a family, and He created you to be a part of it."

2. **Life is about love** (page123-129)

"God wants His family to be known for its love more than anything else."

3. **You are called to belong, not just believe** (page130-137)

"While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intended it to be private."

4. **Life is meant to be shared** (page138-144)

Life includes...unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other "one another" commands found in the New Testament.

5. **Community requires commitment** (page145-151)

Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but he cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make.

6. **Relationships are always worth restoring** (page152-159)

God wants us to value relationships and make the effort to maintain them instead of discarding them whenever there is a rift, a hurt, or a conflict.

7. **It is your job to protect the unity of your church** (page160-167)

Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it, and you rip the heart out of Christ's Body.

Would join me in pursuing a renewed vision from Jesus regarding His bride, the church –such a pursuit will result in a revival of true worship, deepening service and fruitful witness?