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Love Each Other Like Family

1. Do What Works
2. Be Relational First
3. Discipline Yourself for Growth

1 - Do What Works

Ephesians 5:15–17 NLT

¹⁵ So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

- Fishing for Shad - if you're not catching fish, you're doing something wrong.
- Too often we keep doing things that don't work in our lives alone and together.
- God is challenging us to evaluate if the things we are doing work, and make simple changes daily.

John 13:34–35 NLT

³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

1 Corinthians 13:1–3 NLT

¹ If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

- God is calling us to seek him FIRST and to orient our lives to invest in relationships over everything else.
- God is asking us to learn from Jesus exactly how to love each other. This will empower our witness to the world.

3 - Tune Your Thoughts to Light and Love

Proverbs 4:23 NLT

²³ Guard your heart above all else,

for it determines the course of your life.

Philippians 4:4–9 NLT

⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your

hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Ephesians 4:17-32 NLT

¹⁷ With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. ¹⁹ They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

²⁰ But that isn't what you learned about Christ. ²¹ Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, ²² throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶ And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

²⁸ If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. ²⁹ Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

³⁰ And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Matthew 7:1-5 NLT

¹ "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

³ "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

- Our thoughts are the well-spring of our actions.
- We need to seriously evaluate our thought lives.
- Dark thoughts about one another will kill our joy and unity.
- Wounds which aren't healed can become infections. Infections which are not dealt with can go septic.

- The essence of the Spiritual Life is thinking on God constantly in a way that cultivates faith, hope, and love in our thoughts, words, and actions.

Examine + Apply

1. What sorts of thoughts are the common “defaults” in your mind and heart lately?
2. Are you allowing negative ideas and assumptions about another person to sit in your thoughts about one of your brothers or sisters in Christ?
3. What sorts of emotions come up for you as you think about the things you do? Are you learning to think on Christ regularly?
4. If the “JOY OF THE LORD” is our strength... is the way you are living cultivating JOY in God when you are alone? How about when you are doing things with others?
5. What regular discipline do I need to start practicing in light of this?