



Course Name: SALT Discipleship Lesson 10 - Authentic Church Family

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Course description:

This course provides a pathway for a congregation of God's people to be an authentic family as was displayed by the 1st century church.

Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have:

- A. Clarified how to become a church family.
- B. Developed a process to set a vision for what the local church family can become.
- C. Determined how to achieve the vision by defining a clear mission.

Outline of the class: Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask all the groups to spend about 5-10 minutes to describe how they would answer the discussion questions as they are described in each section below. Then have each group share their responses.

- A. To become an authentic church family, members need to genuinely connect with other members even more deeply than we connect to those outside the congregation.**

Outsiders need to see a closeness that they want to be part of. Many new converts leave a church when they find it's only a "Sunday morning thing."

Discussion question 1: Describe the congregation where you attend. Are the members of your congregation a true church family that relies on one another - or - do members come to worship together but are uncomfortable sharing needs and helping one another? Give a reason for your response.

- B. How to connect within the congregation – be vulnerable and be a real church family.**

1. Members are often afraid to share their struggles because they fear being *judged*.
2. We need to judge what is right and wrong and what is sin - but not be "judgey" in how we respond to fellow Christians who are asking for our help to overcome a struggle.
3. Take the first step and be vulnerable with your fellow members and you may be surprised how vulnerable they will be in return.
4. Members are best equipped to help fellow members with struggles through prayer and study.

Discussion Question 2: How does your congregation support one another in their struggles? What can be done to improve the support provided to those in need?

C. Reflect on James 3 and the teaching about taming the tongue.

1. Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
2. Many members of congregations struggle to get over something someone has said to them at some time in the past. Think about using these “gatekeepers” of how to talk with one another.
 - a. Is it true?
 - b. Is it kind?
 - c. Is it necessary?
3. When members are communicating with one another, always assume positive intent.
4. Communication is an exchange of information. Email, pulpit announcements or bulletin announcements are information, not communication.

D. To be an authentic church family, everyone needs to pull in the same direction.

1. Sharing a common view of the future and agreeing on goals along with how to achieve them brings everyone closer together.
2. A process to make sure everyone pulls in the same direction can include a clear:
 - a. Vision: WHO you want to become
 - b. Mission: WHAT you will do to achieve Vision
 - c. Goals & Planning: HOW you will achieve the Vision and Mission
3. This process cannot be fully accomplished in Bible Study classes. However, the SALT staff can facilitate a process separately to get this done.

Discussion Question 3: When you enter the building 5 years from now, what do you see? A lot of new members? The same people 5 years older? A mix of young and older? How would you describe the congregation overall in 5 years?

E. When thinking about setting goals, consider:

1. Ephesians 4:20 – “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think “
2. We should plan for what God wants for our congregation. We should set “God-sized” goals. Think in an “unconstrained” way since God can do anything - don’t think about budget or resource constraints when setting goals for your congregation.

Discussion Question 4: Thinking of Ephesians 4:20, what are some “God-sized” goals you could set for your congregation?

Conclusion:

- A. Scripture tells us how each congregation should be an authentic church family.
- B. If not currently a true church family, efforts should be made to realize that goal.
- C. Spend time this week thinking about how you can help the church become the family God intends and desires. Then, set some personal goals to achieve it.