

Fitly Framed Together

In light of these scriptures (and many others)...

- Mark 10:39-30: "in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children"
- Luke 8:21: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it"
- John 17:11-23: "That they all may be one... that they may be made perfect in one"
- Rom. 12:5: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."
- Eph. 2:18-22: "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God... fitly framed together"
- Eph. 3:14-15: "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"
- Eph. 4:3-7: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"
- Eph. 4:15-16: "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth"
- 1 Cor. 12: "there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another"

...it should be understood that the church is one body with many members; that the members should be joined together; that the joining together ("joints") of its parts supply that which is necessary to compact the body; that we, through Christ, are the family and household of God, he being our Father; and that this spiritual family is *more significant* than family of flesh and blood.

It has been a longstanding custom of our churches to regard "church" as the weekly event, and/or the place of congregation, where people gather together to hear what is spoken by the pastor. Church has become "the pastor" + "the place" + "the program". This isn't to say that it's wrong to have pastors to teach, places to meet, or programs to do things decently and in order. But the church is to be more than a group of strangers who sit next to each other while they listen to the same preaching and sing the same songs, and then go their separate ways to apply the preaching to their own, private lives. The fact that we have accepted this as "church" for so long does not make it a viable alternative to what God intends his church to be and to do.

The church is a family. It's a body of members who need one another and help one another to grow. The church is part of God's consolation to believers who are disconnected from the world and from families for Jesus' sake and the gospel's. If that bond is not realized, people have nowhere to go. They often either feel isolated and alone, or they are driven back to the things and people that God wants them to separate from.

The interaction of church members is vital. Paul says in Ephesians 4 that every one in the body is given by Christ a measure of grace, and that there is an effectual working in the measure of every part. God works differently in every believer's life, intending them to join together and supply that which is lacking in other believers' lives. Only together, as many members in one body, can we grow up into Christ in all things, because each one of us has a different effectual working of Christ that we are to share with one another and contribute to the whole.

We also need to be closely knit so that any dangers to the church—evil thoughts, roots of bitterness, heresies, or false brethren—can be found out early, or even prevented; rather than trying to mitigate damage when such a thing has spread. Believers that are intimately connected can strengthen one another and protect one another, and work together to overcome. If one prevail against him, two shall withstand him.

All this takes more than incidental contact, saying hi after service, or connecting with only our favorite people and cliques in the church. It takes true fellowship, prayer, labour, determination, purpose, focus. Or, as Paul said, “endeavouring”. We must be willing to put in some effort. We must be willing to make the time to obey the Lord in this thing. It is important to him; it must be important to us.

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As a measure to exercise the church toward this activity and mindset, I’d like to make the following proposal:

- We start a program, essentially a basic outline with a schedule. (The schedule is important to help us be consistent and not leave anyone out.) I’ve taken the liberty of giving it what I feel is an appropriate, scriptural name: *Fitly Joined Together*, or simply, *Fitly Joined* (Eph. 4:16); or, for the alliterative appeal, *Fitly Framed* (Eph. 2:21).
- Families and/or individuals sign up to be scheduled in a round-robin manner to meet up each week with someone else on the list. By the end of the schedule, everyone will (in theory) have spent some time with everyone else on the list.
- If you are unable to meet up with the designated party on the given week, due to illness, travel, etc., make an effort to contact them by phone, or to make it up as soon as you can. Don’t just cancel on people to avoid them.
- Those matched are responsible to communicate with each other to set up a mutually agreeable time and place; it may be meeting at a coffee shop for half an hour, or getting together for half a day over the weekend. Whatever works for you both. You have liberty.
- When you meet up, spend time in Christian fellowship. Talk together, share your lives, pray for each other, read scripture together, study together, speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs... Again, you have liberty.

The idea is not to subject people to yet another regimented, mechanical obligation; but rather to break down the walls of partition between people who are supposed to be *family*. To build friendships. To knit hearts together in love. To foster charity. To identify and exercise spiritual gifts. To bear one another’s burdens. To edify. To teach, to correct, to exhort, to rebuke. To comfort. To be the church. To be *fitly framed together*, growing unto an holy temple in the Lord.