

WE'RE PART OF THE FAMILY

Joe Slater

We sometimes sing a song with the same title as this article. It points out that we've been born again, we love each other, we belong to Christ, and we're headed home together. How wonderful!

Think about this: we really are **part of** the family! We don't just visit once in a while. The Lord's church is a family – the *“house (family) of God, which is the church of the living God”* (1 Timothy 3:15). As Christians, we *“are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19). Christians are brothers and sisters of the same Heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 6:18).

As a part of God's family, you do not just “visit” your fellow-Christians. Two things spring to mind. First, some brothers and sisters act like visitors because their attendance is so sporadic. When they happen to show up, their presence is unexpected and surprising (like having company drop in). Certainly we're thrilled to see them, but we can't count on them to be here next time we meet.

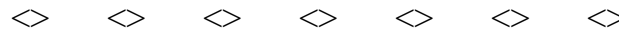
Family members are expected to be “home” on a regular basis. Generally, they do not have to be begged, cajoled, wheedled, and otherwise pressured to come home. When they are absent for prolonged periods for no compelling reason, the rest of the family naturally becomes concerned.

Second, even some Christians who attend on a regular basis behave more like visitors than family members. They do not pitch in to help with the work (not just in the assembly, but throughout the week). Rather, they expect others to wait on them, fuss over them, check on them, and pat them on the head. Just fail to pamper them, and watch the fur fly! These have not learned what

Jesus taught: *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Mark 10:45a).

Most families expect every member to do his/her part of the necessary tasks to keep the household running smoothly. Even so, every Christian ought to welcome opportunities to serve, rather than looking for reasons to be offended because *“they didn't treat me right.”* Likening the church to a human body, Paul said that *“the whole body [is] joined together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share”* (Ephesians 4:16).

Christian, how blessed you are to be part of God's family! Don't just visit once in a while – come ‘home’ regularly, and participate in the family activities. You'll be happier, the church will grow, and our God will be glorified!



Presidential Wisdom

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

--Abraham Lincoln (Proclamation of a National Day of Fasting, 1863)

Fighting Fire With Fire

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21 NASU).

Abigail Van Buren, best known for her famous “Dear Abby” column, was once the queen of witty advice. On one particular occasion she said something especially thought-provoking: “People who fight fire with fire usually end up with ashes.”

While it is true that firefighters have often used fire to help limit the damage of a forest fire, the end result is always the same: more ashes. Outside the forest, too many in our world choose to fight fire with fire. In other words, they respond to hotheaded people and fiery situations by doing the exact same thing. They spread rumors about the person who gossips about them. They lie about the person doing the lying. They slander, insult, and seek revenge against those who do the same to them. They are fighting fire with fire. The problem is, this just ends up causing more disaster, more problems, and more ashes.

A nice cold bucket of love, forgiveness, and kindness would do wonders in hot situations like these. After addressing several different types of relationships, Peter said it best: *“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing”* (1 Peter 3:8-9).

Returning evil for evil will always add to the overall damage. Using God's problem solving techniques is always better than our own. Let's put out the fires and resolve to be a part of the solution.

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