

Open Letter to the DFW Church of Christ

From the Elders and Evangelists - Sunday, March 02, 2003

James 3:13-18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

We as a staff want to share some convictions that have deepened in the last couple of months in the ministry here. These convictions have led to some serious soul searching about our leadership. The purpose of this letter is to openly apologize and ask for the congregation's forgiveness in the following areas of our ministry that include:

Leadership; Discipling; Motivation; Finances; and Doctrines. Our repentance stems from discussions following the Kingdom Unity Conference in November, the Great Plains Ministry Retreat in December, the Northern Federation Leadership Conference in January, as well as our local Deacons meetings and the congregational LOVE Talks. In addition to these activities the staff has also read many letters, e-mails, and documents from around the brotherhood (including the letter from Henry Kriete in London). We have also received much feedback from our membership here that we truly appreciate. All of these have convicted us as a staff to our need for some radical changes.

These are dynamic and significant times in the church. We are grateful that since the Unity Conference great change has become possible in our fellowship. We have been in a period of transition for a couple of years here in Dallas, but we believe God's Spirit is revealing a better way for His church. We believe that God has been pleased with many of our efforts as we have sought to evangelize the world in our generation, but He has obviously chosen to discipline us at this time. It is important for us all, as disciples of Christ, to acknowledge God's judgment of our church and of ourselves personally. God has been patient as many of our weaknesses and transgressions have continued for many years, but now is a time for significant change. Change can be unsettling, but it is our goal to be a church that God can bless. We in the leadership realize our responsibility before God and we are deeply sorrowful for our sin and the hurt we have caused. We understand that your trust in our leadership has been damaged because of these things and we pray that you can accept our repentance. These things were not done with malicious intent or with a desire to hurt anyone but with sincerity of heart to win the world to Christ. But in doing so, we were caught up in our "system" to win the world rather than being the family of God.

Leadership

There are several areas of leadership we want to address including hierarchy, the role of Elders, staff/non-staff relationships, brotherhood/autonomy, and authority. The ICOC has been organized in a hierarchical structure that fostered an excessive use of authority. Our leadership model was a corporate paradigm that created an atmosphere of control and a culture of oppression. Individual freedoms and personal conscience were violated because of this authoritarian approach. This culture did not allow for freedom of expression and shut down feedback. The hierarchy could not be challenged and the leadership was unapproachable and inflexible on many issues of opinion. The paradigm we see in the scriptures is one of family.

*(Ephesians 2:19-20 ¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and **members of God's household**, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.; Mark 3:31-35 ³¹Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." ³³"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. ³⁴Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.")*

The family model emphasizes relationships instead of structure and love instead of authority. Many people have been hurt and neglected by the cold, non-relational, corporate approach to ministry and many have left our church. In a family the strong bonds of love seek to protect rather than judge. Many people have felt like assets in a corporation instead of valued family members. We are broken hearted for making people feel this way. No one should feel like a cog in the wheel but rather an indispensable, gifted part of God's family.

*(1 Corinthians 12:12-26 ¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with **special honor**. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked*

it, ²⁵so that there should be **no division** in the body, but that its parts should have **equal concern for each other**. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.)

Our system supported a one-man leadership style that had devastating effects upon the membership. The New Testament describes a team leadership approach for the church of Elders, Evangelists, and Teachers.

(Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.)

A group of spiritually qualified leaders is necessary to make wise judgments. In the past, the role of elders has not been respected which has desperately hurt the church. The church has not been protected because the elders have not been empowered to fulfill their God-given role. The scriptures direct the elders to oversee

(Acts 20:28-30 ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.)

The scriptures direct the elders to oversee the affairs of the church and to be the decision makers for the congregation. Our Hierarchical system did not recognize team leadership and especially the role of the elders.

1 Peter 5:1-3

¹To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Team leadership also respects the unique gifts of the many different members. Involving more people in leadership is essential for a healthy church. A clergy/laity mindset has been fostered in the congregation between staff and non-staff members. Besides Elders and Evangelists, Deacons must be recognized as men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom capable of also providing gifted service for the church.

(Acts 6:3 ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them).

Even beyond the Elders, Evangelists, and Deacons the New Testament describes members with other gifts to build up the Body.

(Romans 12:3-8 ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.)

In the future advisory groups will be utilized to address specific needs of the church. The goal will be to have groups that will consist of gifted membership, whether staff or non-staff.

The hierarchy forced unity and conformity without discussion and without allowing for free-will decisions. Often expectations were mandated upon the local church resulting in pressure being applied to achieve goals (growth, financial, etc.) that were not realistic. We sincerely apologize for the guilt and pressure many brothers and sisters felt because of this approach. We believe in brotherhood and cooperation between churches out of our common purpose and beliefs. The relationships we have with other congregations will not be a forced cooperation but rather a desired unity.

(2 Corinthians 8:13-15 ¹³Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, ¹⁵as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.")

Discipling

Abuses within discipling relationships have occurred in our church. Discipleship trees have been used to order relationships at times in an unhealthy way. Abuses of authority in giving advice and direction resulted. People felt controlled and manipulated through such highly structured relationships. Discipleship should occur as the mature help the less mature to grow spiritually.

(Hebrews 5:11-14 ¹¹We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹²In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.)

Discipling relationships should help one another overcome sin and temptations. Spiritual brothers and sisters are instructed to help others in spiritual need. We are our brother's keeper.

(Galatians 6:1 ¹Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.)

We should practice being prayer partners with one another by confessing our sins and praying for each other. Confession should always be practiced in an atmosphere of confidentiality and love.

(James 5:16 ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.)

Instead of ordering such relationships we believe in peer discipling through one another relationships. The membership should choose their own relationships, which they believe will encourage their own spiritual growth. We want to encourage the one another way:

Romans 12:10

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:16

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 13:8

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Romans 14:13

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Romans 15:7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:14

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

Romans 16:16

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

Ephesians 5:21

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

James 4:11

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 4:9

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 5:5

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 3:11

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:23

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

1 John 4:7

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11-12

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

2 John 1:5

And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.

Motivation

We want to apologize for improperly motivating the church in the past through guilt, fear, statistics, pressure, and humanism. The motivation for the Christian life should come from the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the perfect balance of all motivations used by God in the Bible. The Cross is a demonstration of God's love for all men. Sin is also dealt with by the passion of Christ. The Cross is what will produce Godly sorrow in our lives. God's demonstration of love and forgiveness will produce conviction about sin. Gratitude for how much God has sacrificed for us should be fundamental in why we do what we do.

(2 Corinthians 5:14-21 ¹⁴For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.)

God never desired for us to live in a constant state of guilt. The use of stats and human pressure have replaced the Godly motivations of the Cross, grace, love, forgiveness, and gratitude. We have abused stats which has created competition that fed selfish ambition and pride. There was too much accountability with numbers that created a sense of failure and despair. The ministry was measured in humanistic ways instead of appreciating spiritual growth. Again the corporate paradigm of the church encouraged the proliferation of stats, accountability, and humanistic measurements. We are convicted by our reliance upon humanistic efforts and methods in growing the church rather than trusting the power and sovereignty of God. Please forgive us for the pain and hurt this caused.

(2 Samuel 24:10 ¹⁰ David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD , "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD , I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.")

Finances

We want to apologize for financially over-extending the church. With rapid growth, greater and greater financial challenges have faced our church. Financial commitments grew rapidly on local, geographic sector, and world sector levels. The ever-increasing financial responsibilities for the DFW church have been missions, benevolent projects (HOPE), our building, and the camp in addition to regular operating budgets. These have burdened our membership to their financial limits. The expectations to fulfill all

these financial needs began to feel like bills to be paid and taxes to be fulfilled instead of free-will gifts of worship to God. Better financial planning and realistic growth and expansion would have lowered the financial needs. We are sorry for over-burdening the church. We want to acknowledge the incredible sacrifice of the members over an extended period of time to fulfill these financial challenges. Your generosity has resulted in great fruit in innumerable ways.

(2 Corinthians 9:12-15 ¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!)

To fulfill the financial obligations a system of weekly accountability has been practiced. This system of accountability caused many to give by compulsion instead of gratitude. Giving should be an act of worship to bring honor and glory to God. We believe that moving our contribution from our Sunday worship to mid-week services has hindered the worship aspect in our giving. Tithing has been falsely taught as a requirement of the new covenant. The expectation of contribution in the New Testament is a sacrifice on a weekly basis in keeping with a percentage of ones income.

(1 Corinthians 16:1-2 ¹Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.)

The percentage is not specified in the New Testament. We apologize for the coercion that has been felt in regards to our weekly and special contributions. We are sorry for compelling people to give beyond their means. We recognize that financial accountability is taught in the scriptures, but we want to promote and encourage generosity based on a cheerful heart, not because of accountability.

(2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 ¹⁶I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. ¹⁷For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. ¹⁸And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. ¹⁹What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. ²⁰We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. ²¹For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. ²²In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. ²⁴Therefore show these

men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it. Chapter 9 ¹There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. ²For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we--not to say anything about you--would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.)

We are committed to fiscal responsibility through an active board of directors and teamwork between administration, ministry staff, and non-staff members. Advisory groups will be utilized to represent the congregation regarding financial matters.

Doctrines

It has been falsely taught that the ICOC is the "One True Church". This is exclusive and arrogant. The Bible teaches there is one way to salvation that is Jesus Christ.

(Acts 4:12 ¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.; Acts2:38 ³⁸Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit., John 14:6 ⁶Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.)

The Bible teaches that when anyone becomes a true Christian they are baptized into the church.

(1 Co 12:12-13 ¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.).

God defines His church, not man. We are striving to be the church God wants us to be. We believe God will be the judge of all churches and all people.

Though we believe that we should strive to be a model church to other churches, the concept of a Pillar Church has been abused.

(1 Thessalonians 1:7 ⁷And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.)

Members and leaders have been moved in a way that has hurt the spiritual health of other congregations and also of individuals. The Dallas church has benefited from many who have moved here. The selfish ambition that often motivated these efforts was wrong and we are sorry. The hearts of those who moved with the mindset of missionaries is to be commended. As the Dallas Church, we are committed to being self-supporting and to being a giving "Parent" congregation rather than a receiving

"Pillar church". We are sorry for weakening other churches in order to strengthen Dallas.

Mark 9:38-41

³⁸"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." ³⁹"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. Again we want to apologize for the sins we've committed and tolerated in the past. We will continue to make every effort to change. We ask for your patience as the church changes and our fellowship worldwide changes. Our prayer is to humbly follow God as He leads us by His Spirit into the future. We also pray that God will work everything together for good and reconcile our wrongs. We pray for healing for everyone who was injured by our sins in this ministry. We plead for God's Mercy and not His justice, as we trust His sovereignty and power. As a leadership, we are open to your on-going input and suggestions. We recognize that this letter is only one step in the process of change. May God continue to be gracious to us and guide us all. Again we repent of our sins. Please accept this confession and apology. We are sorry!

*William Hooper, elder
Charlie Sawyer, elder
Gregg Marutzky, lead evangelist
Todd Asaad
Jerry Hollister
Maurice Hooks
Mike Isenberg
Marvin Lucas
Tom Marks
Rhett Spivey
Derik Vett*

Addendum

Scriptures for further study

Godliness to Embrace

Love

John 13:35

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily

angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

Joy

John 15:10-12

¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

1Peter1:3-9

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Peace

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Romans 14:19

¹⁹Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Ephesians 4:3

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Patience

Romans 12:11-13

¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Kindness

Colossians 3:12-13

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

1 Peter 1:5-9

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Goodness

Romans 15:14

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

Ephesians 5:8-10

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord.

Faithfulness

Matthew 25:21

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

1 Corinthians 4:2

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

1 Peter 4:10

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Gentleness

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Philippians 4:4-6

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

1 Timothy 6:10-12

¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Self-Control

1 Thessalonians 5:5-7

⁵You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

1 Peter 5:8

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Unity

1 Corinthians 1:10

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Ephesians 4:3

³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace

John 17:20-21

²⁰"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Humility

Romans 12:3

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Ephesians 4:2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

1 Peter 5:5-7

⁵Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Sins to Avoid

Division

Titus 1:10-16

¹⁰For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹²Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Titus 3:9-10

⁹But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

Proverbs 10:12

¹² Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

Proverbs 17:11

¹¹ An evil man is bent only on rebellion; a merciless official will be sent against him.

Quarrels

1 Timothy 6:3-5

³If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Proverbs 17:14

¹⁴ Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Proverbs 17:19

¹⁹ He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.

Proverbs 20:3

³ It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

Proverbs 22:10

¹⁰ Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.

Proverbs 26:21

²¹ As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

Bitterness

Hebrews 12:15

¹⁵ See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Anger

James 1:19-20

¹⁹ My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Malicious Talk:

Gossip

Romans 1:28-31

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

1 Timothy 5:13

¹³ Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

Slander

Mark 7:21-23

²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' "

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 4:31

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Godless Chatter

2 Timothy 2:15-16

¹⁵*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*

Unwholesome Talk

Ephesians 4:29-30

²⁹*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*