

1. Let me tie in the last few weeks, so that today we can build upon the groundwork we have already established.
2. In the month of August, we talked about the truth that we are better together.
3. That as believers, we are stronger, more productive, better able to withstand spiritual attacks when we bind together.
4. But that lead us to a question. And the question is, "What is Together?"
5. What does together actually look like.
6. The idea of together solves the problem that God saw near the end of creation. And that was that Adam was alone.
7. **Genesis 2:18** The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
8. So, the solution to the fact that Adam was alone, was that God gave him someone to walk with him. To be one with him. To be intimate with him.
9. And that process of being unified and one is described in **Genesis 2:24** That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.
10. We called it the leaving and cleaving principle.
11. A man leaves his father and mother, he disconnects from them, (not abandon, disown, etc.) for the purpose of connecting with his wife. To become one with her.
12. We said that for each of the four people in this scenario, the idea was that they were not family, but that they became family.
13. Prior to this leaving and cleaving by the man, his parents are not family with this lady who will become his wife.
14. Prior to his leaving his parents, this man is not family with his wife.
15. Prior to his leaving his parents, this woman is not family with any of them. But as this man leaves his parents, and clings to and holds to his wife, these people who were not family become family.
16. From not family to becoming family.
17. All along we have said that this principle of becoming one or family applies to much more than marriage. It also applies to our relationship with other believers.

18. Jesus described his desire for our relationships with other believers in **John 17:20-21** "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that 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.
19. So just as this man and his parents and his wife go from not being family to being family, God desires that we as believers be transformed from being not family, to being family.
20. That we as believers become one with one another, and one with God the father and Jesus Christ his son. And this oneness creates a new family. The family of God.
21. And the amazing thing about our becoming family, is that the world will see this relationship between us as believers, and as a result they will believe in Jesus.
22. One of the greatest witnessing tools we have to reach those in our community who do not know Jesus is our love and family connection with other believers.
23. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that our becoming family is a matter of life and death for those who don't know Jesus.
24. Could I just do a survey for a moment? How many by a raised hand would say, Pastor, based on what you have presented according to the Bible, I believe our being family is of the utmost importance?
25. Good. So today I want us to dig just a little bit deeper into this subject of being the family of God.
26. In Genesis chapter 2, the process of becoming family, of becoming one, is really summed up in five words. And those five words come after the comma. **Genesis 2:24** That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.
27. How many know that to say, and they become one flesh, is a pretty broad statement.
28. It's kind of like the dates on a tombstone. The first date tells when the person was born, and the second date tells when they died, but the life we lived, for however many years, is represented by the dash in between.
29. So today for just a few moments I want us to decode the meaning of becoming one flesh, or becoming family.

**TITLE: How we become family.**

1. In other words, how do we as believers actually go from being not family, to being family?

**Jesus is the One that binds us.**

1. I just absolutely love these two verses in Romans 12:4-5 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
2. What makes us the body of Christ is not that we all look alike. Act alike, or think alike. What makes us the body of Christ is Christ.
3. In Christ, though we are many, though we are not all the same, we form one body.
4. What makes us, us, is not us. What makes us, us, is Jesus. Because without Jesus there is no us. Without Jesus we are just a bunch of individuals running around bumping into one another, hurting one another, and hating one another.
5. So, what binds us together is Jesus. And in the last part of verse 5, we find a very powerful description of what that binding together entails.
6. "And each member belongs to all the others." Now, that doesn't mean that we own one another. We are not each other's property. But what it does mean is that **we are responsible to one another.**
7. I did not say we are responsible for one another. I am not responsible for your commitment to Jesus Christ any more than you are responsible for my commitment to Jesus Christ.
8. You are responsible for you and I am responsible for me. But we are responsible to one another.
9. Meaning, in Christ, we are not meant to function independently of one another. We are meant to function in unison with one another.
10. If we are independent then you do your thing and I do my thing, and whatever will be will be.
11. And on the surface that sounds liberating and freeing. Let's just all do whatever we want. But the reality of our world today is that each of us doing our own thing doesn't bring freedom and fulfillment at all. Why?

12. Because if I live and act like my living and acting only affects me, and you live and act like your living and acting only affects you, eventually your living and my living are going to have a head on collision and someone is going to get hurt.
13. God, in his infinite wisdom, knew that if he gave us a free choice and free will, which he did. That we would make a mess out of things. So, in response to our free will to do whatever we want, he also allows us to suffer the consequences of our free will, and the result is pain.
14. But God loves us. His desire for our lives is not that we live in unnecessary pain. And the answer to the pain that our own sinful choices bring is Jesus.
15. In Christ we are forgiven and set free of the consequences of our sin. But also, in Christ, we are offered this wonderful thing called family. The family of God.
16. And what makes the family of God alive and free and powerful is not when we all do what we want; what makes the family of God alive and free is when we allow Jesus to be Lord, and each in our own way, we surrender to what Christ wants.
17. It is the connection of Christ that brings us together and makes us one.
18. So that leads us to the next aspect of how we become family. it is in believing that...

### **Connection is not meant to be occasional.**

1. It is in believing that connection is not something that can be accomplished once a week on Sundays.
2. One of the great scriptures that I heard used all throughout my childhood and beyond is found in the book of Hebrews chapter 10.
3. Would you turn there with me, either on your phone or some other way?
4. I want to read it to you out of the KJV, because that is the version I grew up with. **Hebrews 10:25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*;
5. Most of the time, that statement was kind of a stand-alone statement.

6. And because of the use of the words assembling of ourselves, the general idea was that this referred to meeting together in a big group. In an assembly.
7. And so, the practical application of that verse was this. We need to go to church on a regular basis. We need to go to church.
8. Let me just say that I agree whole heartedly with that verse, and with that message. I believe that attending church together with other believers is vitally important to our walk with the Lord.
9. I believe wisdom would agree that generally, not always, but generally a slide in church attendance, can signify a slide in relationship.
10. I'm not saying you are backslidden if you miss church. But I am saying that healthy believers come to church on a consistent and regular basis because it is good for them, and obedient to do so.
11. Church on Sunday is very powerful. At times it is electric.
12. Gathering together with other believers, worshipping, praying, seeking, giving. All of those things are lifegiving if we will allow them to be.
13. But now I want to shift gears, and I want to make a distinction.
14. While I believe wholeheartedly that gathering together on Sunday morning is vital to our relationship with Jesus, **gathering on Sunday morning alone is not adequate enough to move us into the realm of being a connected family who belong to one another.**
15. Let me back up for a moment. Remember, according to John chapter 17, Jesus' desire for his disciples and all those who would believe after was that they would be one, just as He and the Father are one.
16. To be family. That on a continual basis, those who are not family, would become family. (salvation)
17. That on a continual basis, those who are not close family, would become close family. (fellowship)
18. So, here's the thing. Hebrews chapter ten verse 25 most assuredly is saying that we need to assemble together on a regular basis. But that isn't all it is saying.

19. You see, verse 25 is not a stand-alone verse. Verse 25 is actually just a part of a more complete thought that begins in vs 24. So, let's tie them together.
20. **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
21. In the NLT it uses the word motivate as another way to say spur.
22. Let us consider how we can motivate one another on toward love and good deeds.... last part of verse 25. By encouraging one another.
23. So, what we find is that the command is much more involved than just assembling ourselves together on Sunday mornings. It also involves the deliberate and purposeful action of, spurring, motivating, and encouraging one another.
24. So that leads us to our last step to becoming family.

### **Connection must be continual.**

1. It is Jesus Christ who binds us together so that we belong to one another.
2. And while it is true that we do need to assemble ourselves together on a regular basis. As in Sundays.
3. I believe it is also true that just Sundays is not adequate enough to include the spurring, and motivating, and encouraging that each of us need on a continual basis.
4. I don't know about you, but I need spurring, and motivating, and encouraging on a daily basis.
5. So that's why, as great and as wonderful, and as powerful as Sunday church is, it's not enough to produce the deep family ties God desires for our lives.
6. And here's an illustration of why. Because spurring, and motivating, and encouraging one another can't be accomplished looking at the back of someone's head.
7. Think about it. Look straight ahead. There's a good chance you can see the back of a lot of people's heads. And at the same time see very few people's faces. That's not bad or wrong. There is a time and place for that.

8. But there is also a time and place to realize that true spurring, and motivating, and encouraging needs to happen face to face.
9. And as wonderful and powerful as Sunday mornings are to be a part of, the reality is that probably 90-95% of our time is not spent face to face.
10. So powerful is this face to face interaction, that Jesus modeled it throughout his time here on earth.
11. Matthew 18:1-2 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" 2 Jesus called a little child to Him and put the child among them.
12. First of all, this whole conversation started as a question and answer time. The disciples were asking Jesus questions, and he was answering.
13. Secondly, notice that it doesn't say that Jesus placed a child in front of them, (like on stage) he put the child among them. That indicates to me a circle. They were face to face.
14. In the book of John, the disciples had been out all night fishing, and John remembered a certain event. John 21:8-12 The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. 9 When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread. 10 "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn. 12 "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said.
15. The beauty of the fact that the Son of God. The Messiah, started a fire, baked some bread, roasted some fish, and served breakfast to his disciples. Normally we don't sit in rows at a campfire, we sit around the fire. Again, they were face to face.
16. Jesus walked and talked with his disciples on boats, in fields, along the road as they traveled. Each time they were face to face.
17. To me it is obvious that the unity and the oneness Jesus was praying for, was not several somewhat acquainted people sitting in rows, the unity and oneness, the becoming of family came as a result of doing life together. In a circle. Face to face. (picture of small group.)

## Conclusion:

1. I hope you will be convinced that what I am about to say next is not some bait and switch, or some trick to get you to do something or to be a part of something.
2. It's not, because those kinds of tactics don't work anyway.
3. The truth is, at BFA we have worked hard to provide the types of face to face encounters we see Jesus model. Those face to face encounters have been hindered somewhat over the past 18 months, and yet the opportunities are still available.
4. We believe as a church and have for years that, week in and week out, the most meaningful conversations available to us are not just quick hello's before and after service, but rather face to face opportunities to do life together.
5. And as cliché and as commonplace as it may sound. That environment is a small group of people, meeting together, eating together. Learning together. Praying for one another.
6. Spurring and motivating one another. Encouraging one another that today, they can handle whatever the Lord allows in their path.
7. Spurring, motivating, and encouraging one another to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a world that so desperately needs Him.
8. Don't worry. There are no sign-up sheets to pass around. I'm not asking you to commit to a topic, or a time slot, or a small group leader.
9. I'm simply asking you to consider if it is possible you **have you been missing a powerful opportunity to be family**, by thinking that gathering in small groups isn't important, or necessary, or even beneficial.
10. That it isn't worth the effort, or setting aside time to grow as a church family.
11. Is it possible we have allowed the pandemic to convince us that doing life together, face to face, should somehow be put on the back burner?
12. I believe whole heartedly that it cannot be put on the back burner any longer.



13. We can only be the church when we are family, and we can only be family when we grow and develop and motivate and encourage one another face to face on a consistent basis.
14. And that will not happen automatically. It will only happen when we as individuals are intentional about being engaged in that type of family relationship.
15. On Wednesday evenings, by the time I get to my small group, I must confess I am worn out.
16. Most days I run out of energy early in the afternoon. Small group is a stretch for me. And yet it is a rare time when I don't leave that group feeling like I ....
  - a. Connected to some men on a more intimate level.
  - b. Grew in my faith along with others.
  - c. I am motivated to serve and give and do better and be better.
  - d. I am just simply energized by my time spent with these men.
17. And that is available to each and every one of us.
18. I want to ask you to pray with me. If you are regularly a part of a small group, will pray that others will experience the kind of family you get to enjoy.
19. If you are not regularly a part of a small group will you make a commitment to become a part of one?
  - a. Sunday morning 9:30 am.
  - b. Tuesday morning 10:30 am.
  - c. Wednesday's 6 pm.
20. Lets all pray for anyone here today (or online) who is not a member of the family of God. (salvation)
21. Let's pray for those in our community who are not a part of the family of God.
22. Offer the gift of salvation.
23. Closing song/prayer.