

“Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.”

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Does your family have a story? Nearly every family does. Our family loves to spend time together just talking. Sometimes it's serious. Many times we're giggling or laughing. Lots of times we reflect on funny stories from the past. There are stories and “key” words only we understand. For example, all five of us know what “pudding” means and it's not a dessert.

These family stories make us who we are and draw us closer to each other. Someday we'll pass on many of these wonderful stories to our grandchildren. They're the heartfelt conversations which make us unique and who we are. Your family probably has them too.

God's plan is for each local church to be a family. Sadly, we've veered from that, particularly in America. Often the local church is more like a business, a religious franchise. It's not what God designed us for.

Anyone studying the New Testament quickly realizes God planned for the local church to be a family. It's one reason why we believe joining a local church is biblical. It's very hard to be a “family” when you're uncertain of who's really in the family or who's committed to it.

It struck me recently we're missing out on something when we're together we can't have out there – family conversations. Jesus designed us to be a Christian counterculture. Our conversations with each other when we gather to worship and fellowship should be different than nearly any other place. Have you ever noticed though, when we're with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we talk about nearly everything else but family matters? Shouldn't spiritual family conversations dominate our dialogue, rather than be the exception? Our times together are opportunities for us to fulfill those powerful “one another” commands in the New Testament?

Some conversations shouldn't take place though in a church family. They're story and “one another” killers. Let me touch on a few.

Whining/complaining. Whining kills communication and God hates whining. It cost the Children of Israel 40 years of wandering. Most churches have far too much of it. It's usually over miniscule things: room temperature, music, seating, refreshments, minor annoyances, volume, etc.

Sarcasm. Our culture is verbally cruel. Sometimes at church the pagan language of digs, put-downs or cuts is used. It's wrong and it's sin.

Politics. When it comes to biblical values, there's very little difference between the political parties. It's primarily a philosophy of government. The only biblical form of government is a Theocracy, which was for Israel and won't happen again until King Jesus returns. To cause Kingdom division over human government is a violation of Galatians 3:28.

Business. Jesus cast the moneychangers out of the Temple. Yet, Americans are so “business” focused, it dominates our conversations, even in church. In a day of cell phones and e-mail, let's work to keep the main thing the main thing – Jesus and His family.

Just a side note here, as plans for our new facility continue to develop, it's tempting to focus on style, costs, etc...and talk about it a lot. This new facility is not the church, WE are. It's merely a tool to help us serve King Jesus. Most conversations about it should go something like this, "Isn't it exciting what God is doing? How can we pray more wisely?"

What are some family conversations we should be having lots of? There are many, let me just touch on a few. All of these find their heart with first loving each other, as Jesus commanded us to do, John 13:34-35.

We must encourage each other. If you and I do not encourage one another, where else is encouragement going to take place? Each week many come in battered and bruised for a myriad of reasons. For some in our church family, this is their safe place. Look for ways to encourage others, particularly spiritual encouragement, 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

We must pray for and with each other. Nothing so thrills my heart than to see folk gathered together praying for each other. Perhaps someone shared a special burden or need. Brothers and sisters stopped right there and prayed with them. Where else can we do that? If you do that at Walmart or the Packer's game, people will think you're a wacko.

We must be kind to each other. Do you look for kind things to say to others? Do you ask how things are going so you can pray for them more intelligently? Do they know you care? Do you? Do you know what burdens or blessings they have? We're to be kind to each other, Ephesians 4:32.

We must admonish each other. Isn't this odd? It's not strange at church to ask someone how work is going or how their kids are doing, even if they've lost weight. Yet, somehow it's weird to ask: What is God teaching you these days? What are you learning from His Word? We need to admonish each other, Colossians 3:16.

We must forgive each other. You're not a Christian unless you've been forgiven. Each of us has been forgiven horrible crimes against God. Yet, many of the "forgiven" carry smoldering cinders of bitterness, often for years, toward other believers. We must forgive each other, Ephesians 4:32.

How can we grow in this area? How do we start making spiritual church family conversations "normal"? It's simple – just start. Perhaps begin sharing one on one something the Lord is teaching you or something you need prayer for, or some special blessing the Lord has given you.

This is new, so baby steps are best. Here are some questions to consider: *What's your most important spiritual goal right now? What's something you believe from the Bible without any doubts? What book of the Bible has had a great influence on you? If God granted you any one request, what would it be? What would you most like people to remember you for after you die? What are the biggest questions you have about your relationship with God? What's something you're thankful for in your life right now?*

If there is one place for God-talk, it's when you're with God's family!