

# I AM THANKFUL FOR...

Church family, *1 Corinthians 12:12-26*

We live in an individualistic culture whose definition of 'the good life' focuses on self-centered, impersonal things. Our place in the world, our value, we are told, connects to things like our career, our money, our car, our clothes, and our appearance. Happiness, our world markets to us, involves beings true to oneself and asserting one's wishes and rights. The 'good life' our world advocates comes with a widely known secret – impersonal things and self-centered pursuits ultimately result in unhappiness and discontent.

God offers a different definition of 'the good life.' The life He pictures focuses on loving relationships with people rather than impersonal things; it focuses on selflessness in a community rather than self-centeredness. God's focus on relationships helps explain the central place He gives to the church, which He has tasked with modeling His definition of the good life. This lesson will consider how God's plan for the church offers another reason for our thankfulness:

*I am thankful for church family.*

## God's church-centered plan

- The opening chapters of the Bible reveal an essential insight into God's intentions for humanity - He created us to exist in relationships (*Genesis 2:18*).
- Genesis' account of Adam and Eve's creation illustrates our relational identity – God designed us so that we only find 'wholeness' in relationships (*Genesis 2:18-25*).
- God created us to be people who need relationships because He is a personal, relational being who desires a relationship with us (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12-13*).
- Just as love motivates God's relational design (*1 John 4:8-10*), so do love-motivated relationships define His plan for humans (*1 John 4:7-11; Matthew 22:34-40*).
- Even though the Bible opens with a picture of a personal, relational God creating people to be in relationships with Him and with one another, the Bible reveals humanity's rejection of God's intention and the corruption and violence their disregard created (*cf. Genesis 6:11*).
- God commissions His people to be a contrast community to the world's ugliness. For example, consider the portrait of the church in the New Testament:
  - Through Jesus, God creates a new humanity whom He adopts into His family (*Ephesians 2:11-22; 1:5*).



- God forms the new humans He adopts into the church, a community of people through whom God reveals His "manifold wisdom"<sup>1</sup> (*Ephesians 3:1-10*).
- The church reveals God's wisdom not merely by believing in the 'right things' but by doing the "good works" God tasked them to perform (*Ephesians 2:10*).
- Those "good works" focus on developing love-motivated relationships (*Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11; 4:7-21*).
- Certain features define the love-motivated relationships God instructs the church to develop, features like:
  - **Unity** that elevates and honors those with the least honor (*1 Corinthians 12:12-25*).
  - **Equality** that dismantles social and cultural boundaries (*Galatians 3:26-28*).
  - **Mutual dependence** that rejects individualism (*Ephesians 4:11-16*).
  - **Selflessness** that promotes others' concerns over one's own concerns (*Philippians 2:1-8*).

God intends the church to be a source of healing and wholeness in a world filled with broken people and relationships. Too often, however, churches participate in the world's ugliness. God's plan for the church and the unfortunate reality of churches in our world makes me thankful for you all.

*I am thankful for you all because you value God's word more than your traditions and preferences.*

*I am thankful for you all because you are committed to Jesus and focused on Christlikeness.*

*I am thankful for you all because you love and care for one another.*

*I am thankful for you all because you desire to serve people and generously give your resources to help others.*

*I am thankful for you all because you prioritize peace and unity.*

I thank God for you all every day, and I pray that He will continue to guide you as you seek to serve Him.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

