

# ***My Crazy Family***

## ***4. My Church Family***

***Nov. 24-25, 2017***

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Welcome to Crossroads. My name is Andrew - one of the pastors on staff, and if this is your first time at Crossroads, I'm so glad that you are here today. We are finishing a message series called My Crazy Family. Thanksgiving was just a few days ago, and I'm sure that many of us have a new appreciation for the phrase "My crazy family!"

The first Thanksgiving that Lauren and I celebrated as a married couple, I made the mistake of asking my wife to host Thanksgiving dinner for both of our families. I wish that someone wiser than me had pulled me aside and said, "Andrew, it's not a wise idea to ask a young bride to host Thanksgiving for all of her in-laws in your first year of marriage."

While I was single, none of my family was local, and I didn't get to see them for holidays. But, Crossroads took care of me. One couple always hosted me for Easter. I spent Thanksgivings with another Crossroads family. A third family included me for Christmas every year. My church family always took care of me. I recognize that my experience in church may not be the norm for other people.

In our culture today, there are a lot of misconceptions and negative views about what the church is. A few months ago, I was answering someone's questions about Crossroads, and they casually remarked, "Crossroads is a for-profit organization, right?" They were really surprised when I said Crossroads is a non-profit 501c3 organization. Some may think church is an old fashioned establishment, or a social club, or just another place to find a future spouse.

Today, we are going to look at what God's Word has to say about being a healthy church family. We will be focusing on several passages from the Bible in the book of Philippians. If you need a Bible, ushers are coming down the aisles. I strongly encourage you to have a Bible or the Bible App open because we are going to be jumping around to different chapters in Philippians. Philippians is a letter written by Paul in the First Century to the church in the city of Philippi. And through this letter, we are going to learn about the qualities that make for a healthy church family. Let's read the opening line of the letter.

*Philippians 1:1-2. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **The Church is People.**

The church is not a building. It's not a place with four walls, a roof, and a cross. We are the church. Paul calls the Philippian church God's holy people, overseers, and deacons. Who are these people? You can read in Acts 16 about when Paul started the church in Philippi. We don't have time to read the whole story, but let me summarize who the Philippians were. First, Paul met a woman named Lydia. The Bible tells us that she was a dealer in purple cloth. In that culture, purple cloth was very rare and expensive. Lydia was an entrepreneur who probably made a very good living as a merchant of fine clothing for the wealthy class. Lydia's family members were the first Philippians that Paul baptized, and she hosted the church's first small group in her home.

The second person is a young woman who was tormented by an evil spirit. The spirit gave her powers to predict the future, and some men enslaved the poor girl profiting from her pain by using her in a fortune telling business. When Paul meets the slave girl, he commanded the evil spirit to leave her and she became sane. The slave owners are furious that they can't make money off of her anymore. So, they drag Paul and his friends in front of the magistrate and accuse them of being rebels and troublemakers. In the end, Paul was placed under arrest, beaten with rods, and thrown in prison.

No one bothered to ask whether Paul was a Roman citizen. In that time it was illegal to beat and detain a Roman citizen without a trial. While Paul was in jail (around midnight) God caused an earthquake to knock open the prison doors and shake loose the prisoners' chains. The jail guard was afraid he would be executed for failing to do his job, so he drew his sword to kill himself. That's when Paul shouted, "Don't do it! We are still here!" That night, the jailer and his family became followers of Jesus too, and the next day, all charges against Paul were dropped.

The first people of the Philippian Church were Lydia, the demon possessed girl, and the jailer and their families. Here, we see that the church is a family of diverse people: men and women; wealthy and poor. The church is not a group of robots. The church is made up of individual people from different ethnicities and unique upbringings. The church is diverse, and the church is not perfect.

We can see that the church is a family of broken people. Remember the Philippian Church: a successful business woman, a girl tormented by a demon, a city employee who almost killed himself. They were imperfect people. If you came to Crossroads expecting to find perfect people, you will be disappointed. We are not perfect. We are broken. Crossroads is a church family of people who need God and need each other. Today, I want to highlight a theme verse. **Philippians 2:5** *“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”* The church is made up of people in relationships with each other. Our relationships with one another will help each of us become more and more like Jesus. Today we are going to learn how each one of us can take personal steps in order to be a healthy church family.

### **The Qualities of a Healthy Church Family are Care & Commitment**

God calls us to care for one another and be committed to the things of God. The church is a work in progress. We are imperfect people growing to be like Jesus. As members of this family, we must **care about growing**. Paul encourages the church in Philippi to care about growing. **Philippians 1:9-10** *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,<sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”* As a church family, our love must continue to grow and our intimate knowledge of God must continue to increase. If we pursue personal growth as individuals, we are growing the entire church family.

The best way to grow at Crossroads is through a small group. Small groups are designed for believers to support one another as we grow. We need each other to help understand the Bible and apply God’s principles to our lives. I work with hundreds of teenagers here at Crossroads. Sometimes, I will ask a student which is their favorite part of Elevate, our student ministry, and nearly all say “small group.” They tell me that their small group is where they feel safe to ask questions, express doubt, and grow their faith. I was talking with a group of middle school girls who told me that they love their small group time. They said, “Some of the boy groups try to get through small group as quick as possible so they can go play games, but we like to spend as much time as we can talking about the message and the Bible passage we are learning about.” That group is committed to growing.

I encourage you check out a small group. Indicate on your communicator card if you’d like information about groups. Or stop by the welcome center to check out the various small groups that meet together. If you are new to faith or new to Crossroads, the Following Jesus class is a great place to begin growing your faith. You can find more details about the next class that starts on December 3 in your bulletin.

The second step we can take personally is **commit to the Gospel**. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead so that we can have eternal life. A healthy church family is committed to sharing the gospel and living out the message of Christ in our personal lives. In his letter, Paul encourages the church in Philippi to be committed to the gospel. *Philippians 1:27* ***“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”***

Our conduct ought to reflect the gospel in our relationships at work, at home, and in the community. The gospel is God’s hope for a world that far from him, and when we share the gospel with our neighbors and coworkers, we are inviting more people into our family of faith.

Last month, Crossroads had an initiative called Invite Your One. Each of us was encouraged to identify one friend or colleague who does not have a personal relationship with Jesus and invite them to Crossroads. About a week before I invited my One, I told another Crossroader who I was going to invite. The Crossroader said, “My wife and I have been praying for the same person! And someone in our small group said they want to invite that person too!” A week after that, I received an email from a different Crossroader who named my One in their email. They said, “Andrew, I’m thinking about inviting so-and-so to Crossroads.” I thought to myself, “That’s it! I’m inviting this person right now! I can’t risk another Crossroader stealing my One before I ask them!”

Here at Crossroads, we believe that God’s family is big enough for everyone, and we are committed to inviting more people into our family. I want to encourage you, commit to sharing the gospel. Who is it that God has put on your heart to share the gospel with? Who is your One? Renew your commitment today to sharing the gospel with them or inviting them to Crossroads to hear about Jesus.

Not only do we commit to the gospel, we are also called to **commit to Unity**. *Philippians 2:2* ***“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”*** Paul encourages the Philippians to commit to unity - to be like-minded, showing love, and being of one spirit. Unity is how we express our unconditional love for one another. Remember, as a family, we are diverse and broken people. Just like any family, there will be conflict and disagreement. Unity does not demand that we avoid these challenges, but rather we work together to find solutions and show compassion toward each other. Later in chapter 4 of Philippians, Paul addresses disunity between two church members.

**Philippians 4:2-3** *“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...”* Another version is translated as “Please...settle your disagreement.” Notice, that we don’t know what the disagreement is about. It could have been a theological debate over the end times. Or they could have been fighting over how to serve communion. Maybe Euodia wanted to dip the bread in the juice but Syntyche wanted to drink the wine. We don’t know. Paul’s main concern is that they reconcile for the sake of unity.

When conflict arises within our church family, remember these words in chapter 2. **Philippians 2:3-5** *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”* We are called to humbly look out for the interests of others. Sometimes, disagreement can help refine our ideas and practices. Sometimes, conflict comes out selfishness. We can’t judge someone’s motives - let God’s Spirit handle that. When conflict comes in your small group or your serving team, remember that we must strive for unity. We must listen with compassion, and respond with grace. Working together, we can strive for unity.

I admire the unity that Crossroadsers have displayed. I believe one of the reasons Crossroads has experienced God’s blessings is that for over 26 years, we have been a church unified under one vision, pursuing one mission. This makes me think about a time when members of Crossroads united a year ago for the Radiance Campaign. The vision of Radiance is to increase our financial giving so that we can have the funding to train more leaders, build more space, demonstrate compassion, and plant churches. For several weeks, many of us prayed about the amount God was prompting us to pledge for the next two years. When the day came to make our commitments, I remember watching many, many Crossroadsers walk to the front of this room holding their pledge envelopes. Couples came together; parents carried their young children as they placed the cards in the basket.

The Radiance Campaign is proof of what can happen when a group of believers unite together. Since then, Crossroads has developed more leaders, started new programs to reach our community, and created opportunities for church planters. When we are committed to unity, then we can care for each other.

**Care for Each Other** Most scholars agree that when Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, he was in prison in Rome; probably under house arrest waiting for his trial before Caesar. In Philippians 2:25, Paul mentions that the Philippians had sent one of their members named Epaphroditus to care for Paul’s needs. Perhaps Epaphroditus

brought gifts, or money, or ran errands for Paul since he was under arrest. I'm sure he encouraged Paul with news about the young, growing church in Philippi. Toward the end of the letter, Paul thanks the Philippians for their care. **Philippians 4:16-18** <sup>16</sup>*For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.* <sup>17</sup>*Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.* <sup>18</sup>*I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.* The Philippians understand that Paul's missionary work didn't pay a big salary or provide a year-end bonus. The young church took care of his needs even when he was far away.

We must care for each other. I've seen Crossroaders help support a small group member who lost a job. I've watched older couples take in college students and let them live with them rent free. I've observed Crossroaders answer the call to be foster parents or adopt, and I've watched their small group members support them in the process. I've often thought that even if someone doesn't believe in God, you should at least join a church for the benefits! When you're sick, you get meals delivered, when you have a baby, you can find childcare.

Personally, my church family has cared for me over the years. When I bought my first home, Crossroaders threw me a house warming party and gave me things I needed to make take care of a home (like pots and pans and a vacuum cleaner.) When Lauren and I were married, the majority of our wedding guests were Crossroaders who celebrated with us. Earlier this fall, my grandfather passed away. I was very close to him, and we loved each other deeply. On the day that he passed, I called a friend and said, "I need someone to be with me." That friend was a Crossroader, who came over and spent the evening listening to me tell stories about my grandfather. During the week of the funeral, I received phone calls, texts, cards and letters from Crossroaders. At the viewing, there were flowers delivered with a card that said, "From your Crossroads Church Family." Crossroads has been there with me to celebrate, to grieve, and to grow.

I love our church. We are family. And we take care of each other. If you are new here today, I don't know what type of family background you come from, or what your experience with church has been like, but I want to assure you that Crossroads is a healthy church family. As we leave today, let us thank God for our brothers and sisters. Let us renew our personal care and individual commitment to our church family.