

We are Brothers

New people at church. You look around you and may think, wow for once we are at a church where there are more men than women. And why are there so many single dads? We must be in a unicorn of a church.

Don't be too excited. Many ladies are at women's retreat.

Today's message is primarily for the men as many women are at the retreat. But hopefully there's something in here for you.

- Share update on men's retreat. Great time of fellowship.
- Reminds me of times when I was in high school in England. We played a lot of sports and had good relationship.
- Reflect on what makes us **brothers** in Christ

Slide #1 – “We are Brothers” (title of sermon)

Today's message is simple. **TWO** point.

Slide #2

FIRST POINT: *What makes us brothers in Christ? What does it mean to be a brother? What does it mean to be part of a brotherhood?*

SECOND POINT: *How can we become good brothers in Christ?*

Slide #3

What makes us brothers in Christ?

When the Bible talks about brothers, obviously there are two types – the biological and the spiritual.

When someone calls you a brother in church, we all know that we are referring to each other in the spiritual sense. Not necessarily in the African American sense.

Because its such a prolific word, when we call each other “brothers in Christ” it can call out to many types of images.

What I find funny is that even the word brother has gone through so many permutations.

Today the word “bruh” is the most common form. Even my 5 year old daughter says “bruh” when she is amazed by something, or just slips it in cause she wants to. “Do you watch Peppa Pig or Bluey”. She’ll say, “Bruh, Peppa Pig please”. **Apparently this word has been around since the 1800’s!**

So one of my favourite versions here is “buddy”. I call my son buddy. It is supposed to be endearing.

I also love “buddy” comedies or “buddy” action movies. Lethal Weapon. Rush Hour. Sherlock Holmes (RDJ). Bad Boys. Die Hard with a Vengeance. 21 and 22 Jump Street.

Even during men’s retreat when I see people call each other brothers, or bro, it gives me a sense of warmth. It is endearing.

But what does Jesus say about this?

Slide #4

Matthew 12:50

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” – Romans 8:15

This is quite simple. When we call each other brothers, what we literally mean is that we are all brothers-**in-Christ**. This is because, upon becoming Christian, what is really happening is that we are being adopted into God’s family. We all become his sons and daughters. By extension, it means we are all spiritual brothers and sisters also.

Now, I am the youngest of three sons. I have two elder brothers. I didn’t have to do anything to **become** their brothers. I was born, and lo and behold, I was already someone’s younger brother. So in the same way – the moment us men chose to call yourselves disciples of Jesus, we too became sons of God and became brothers to one another. **We have, in essence, entered into a NEW REALITY. We have begun to partake in a brotherhood which God himself had created.**

Slide #5

Bonhoeffer says this:

Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Jesus Christ alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and for it. – Bonhoeffer, Life Together

So if there is one thing to take away from this, is that if you call yourself a Christian today, then look to the person next to you and say this: “You and my Brother. We are in “it” together!”.

Slide #6

We are Brothers. We are in IT together.

Why is it so important to remind ourselves of this? What does it mean to be “in it together”? What is the “IT” that we are together for?

Well, the “IT” is what ties us together. The church is not just another club to join. It is not some spiritual cigar lounge where men gather to have a good smoke, a good laugh, and then part ways.

Story about making friends growing up – wanted to fit in. Not sure how I fit in. Wanted to be cool. Wanted to play the cool games. Play the cool sports. Went to the gym to stay fit, to be cool. All of it was so that I could be loved, that I could be accepted. When I went to University orientation in the UK – I remembered distinctly running between two crowds. So sad!

How is that any different when we become Christian? Maybe our motive is just to be noticed, to be cared for by others, to be observed, to be heard, to feel included in this body. Maybe no-one outside of the church wants to be friends with us, maybe no-one acknowledges us, so we want to be acknowledged here, so we want to be called a brother and feel accepted here.

Or maybe you are on the other end of the spectrum. Maybe you feel that I am already accepted and recognised by the world, but I need a little bit extra. I need that spiritual philosophy in my backpocket. I need to call myself a Christian so that I have the full package – recognised by the world, and recognised by God. Like I’m a man of both worlds – maybe that’s where you are.

Here are some sobering words from CS Lewis:-

Slide #7

CS Lewis:

“That is why those pathetic people who simply ‘want friends’ can never make any. The very condition of having Friends is that we should want something else besides Friends. Where the truthful answer to the question Do you see the same truth? would be ‘I see nothing and I don’t care about the truth; I only want a Friend,’ no friendship can arise- though Affection of course may. There would be nothing for the Friendship to be about;

and Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travelers.”

Friendship MUST BE ABOUT SOMETHING.

Slide #8

We are Brothers. We are in IT together.

The common objective is to **encounter God, so that we actually have the desire to do the will of the Father. Isn't that our vision at SP? A place where we can ENCOUNTER GOD?** And isn't the point of encountering God so that we can also **DO HIS WILL?**

- **Finally, I don't need to do anything to be accepted. I just need to be His Son. I just need to do His Will. And in drawing close to Him, He will surround me with fellow Brothers who are also drawing close to Him. I just need to care about the VERTICAL relationship, and He will care for my HORIZONTAL relationships.**

Slide #9

“(I)n Friendship...we think we have chosen our peers. In reality, a few years' difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another, posting to different regiments, the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting – any of these chances might have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,’ can truly say ‘You have not chosen one another, but I have chosen you for one another.’ – CS Lewis – Four Loves

Beauty of church – we start connecting to people of all types of all backgrounds. I love it! Not about finding the same demographic. It is all about finding people who want to be on this spiritual journey with you!

Slide #10

Point 2: What is a good Brother?

The Bible is littered with terrible brother relationships. Sibling rivalry is a key theme that goes all the way back to Genesis. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau. Joseph and his brothers. **Even the older brother and the prodigal son in the parable – the older brother was jealous and angry and did not celebrate the prodigal son's return.**

Cain wanted to be approved more than Abel in his sacrifice. Esau wanted his birthright. The brothers did not like Joseph's dreams. The older brother in the prodigal son story didn't approve of how his father doted on the younger son though the younger son did nothing.

It goes without saying that at the core of these broken brotherhoods, broken relationships, is **the yearning for love, for attention, for what they feel that they deserve. There is an unhealthy competition, and one-up-manship. I need to be better than you.**

But Jesus flips it on the head. He is the elder brother that never was. In Romans 8:29 he is the firstborn among many brothers.

Instead of being like Cain, instead of being like Esau, instead of being like Joseph's older brothers who cast him in the wilderness out of jealousy and anger, instead of being like the older brother in the prodigal son story who refuses to celebrate the younger brother's return, **Jesus is always our biggest supporter. He loves spending time with us. He gives us wisdom. He serves us wholeheartedly.**

Slide #11

There are examples where these brotherhoods are beautiful. Think of Jonathan and David and their beautiful friendship and brotherhood. When Jonathan's father, King Saul, tried to kill David, we learned that Jonathan helped David to escape and survive Saul's attacks. This is because Jonathan pledged his allegiance in brotherhood for

David with one simple verse: **“Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you” (1 Sam 20:4).**

Or even in Exodus 17:11-13 when the Israelites were being attacked by the Amalekites, you may remember the story of when Moses stood on the top of the hill with the staff of God in His hands lifted up, Israel would be winning in the battle. But when he lowered his hands, the Amalekites would win. So, he had two brothers – Aaron, his biological brother, and a companion called Hur, who lifted up his hands. **One on one side, one on another.**

- My brothers look out for me. My eldest brother in particular keeps checking in on me. He keeps asking about how I’m doing in life. He actually takes initiative to ask how I’m doing. When we do family gatherings, he asks about my work, about my relationship with clients, about the kids. He is **intentional**. **Wouldn’t it be great if you had a brother, or a spiritual brother, who is intentional in checking in on you?**
- **Now multiply that infinitely because Jesus doesn’t just “check-in” on us. He actually goes out of his way to pave a path for us to grow. He is the elder brother that Abel, that Joseph, that the prodigal son never had. He is the elder brother that perhaps many of us never had or will ever have.**

Now think long and hard right now. Are there any brothers in this body whom you would lift their arms up if their arms were weak in their battles?

Think about Jonathan and David. Their brotherhood was not biological, but it was forged out of battles, forged out of walking together. What did it take to reach the stage that Jonathan could say to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you”? 1 Samuel 23:16 even says, Jonathan went to David and helped him find strength in God. David was already being persecuted and in hiding in the desert. Jonathan went out to David to help him find strength. Are there any brothers in this body whom you would go out to, not in your convenience, but actually against your convenience, against your schedule, well outside of your comfort zone, to help him find strength?

Are there brothers who would do the same for you?

Whether the answer is a yes or no is irrelevant. For me, these questions are more important than the answer. Because if you've never asked these questions, whom you could lift up, whom you could serve, the chance is, you've not been a great brother and its possible there is no one standing alongside you either.

But, if there is any chance of being a better brother, it doesn't start with common hobbies. It doesn't start with being with those in the same demographic. It doesn't start with doing some games or sport or activities together. That is all great, that is all good for bonding, but that is no more than social lubricant.

Because let's not forget that our brotherhood is a status. It isn't something earned, or something created through trial and error of friendship. It is something we're born into after we're born again. We're already brothers. The question is, are we good brothers or bad brothers?

Maybe there is a brother whom you don't even like in your HC, or in this church. Maybe you feel like he is long winded, he is obnoxious, he is a show-off, he flaunts his wealth or his job, he humblebrags about his achievements or his family's achievements. Or maybe he always asks for your attention, he is sucking the life out of you, he is always asking for your time, or even your money. That doesn't mean that person has stopped being your brother, so long as it is in Christ's Will for you to serve him and to love on him.

That is why, if you want to learn to be a better brother in Christ, it isn't simply about being more compassionate, being more patient, being more kind, or being more supportive. It isn't about how to be a better servant. It certainly isn't just about telling our brothers, "You've got this!" and sending them empty or meaningless encouragements. In fact, I've found that even in my patience and in my gentleness I might have even enabled bad behaviours amongst my fellow brothers in Christ, because I ought to have been honest in rebuking them but I have decided to be non-confrontational instead.

It is actually first and foremost about looking to Jesus. It is actually about having a love encounter, a truth encounter with God first, and so that by testing we may discern what is the Will of God, what is good, acceptable and pure. Because it is by knowing, and doing, His Will that we are God's children and that we are Jesus' Brother. Let Him be your Master, let Him teach us how to be that elder brother. He may tell us it is a time to serve our brother by being honest in rebuking him, or advising him on his blind spots, or lending him money, or just spending time together with him in grief, or even helping him to mediate his unreconciled relationships with friends or family, or even just sending him a loving message to tell him that I am interceding for him. It could be all of that, and more, so long as it is in the Will of God to serve our brothers in that way.

WORSHIP TEAM

Slide #12

We are Brothers. We are in IT together.

Slide #13

We are Brothers. We are in HIM together.

1 Samuel 23:16 even says, Jonathan went to David and helped him find strength in God.

If Jesus our elder brother would come to us where we are to find strength in Him, are we willing to go out to our brothers to where they are, so that we would help them find strength in Him?

MINISTRY TIME

Recite – 1 Corinthians 1:

²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us

wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”