

Dear Chapel Family...my Chapel family

Being asked to write a letter to the Chapel is, to me, being asked to write a letter to my family. This place has been my family for 30 years and what I know of “church” has largely been shaped here.

Knowing that we ARE the church...the church Jesus is building day by day and week by week in our lives must be more than head knowledge. It has to happen in our hearts. In each of our hearts if we are to be His church, perfected and matured by His Spirit.

Like each of our own biological families, our church family goes through ups and downs, times of celebrating and times of grieving. It is part of life, part of relationship. I have found time and time again that it is in times of grieving that I grow the most, that I turn to Jesus the most, that I beg to be changed into His likeness in order – frankly – to come out the other side, once more into joy and rejoicing.

The core values I have learned here with my Chapel family are the very same that I know Jesus wants to be the bedrock of every relationship in my life.

1. Contending to love one another, regardless...because that's how Jesus loves me.
2. Agreeing to disagree without being disagreeable...because that leaves me open to grow and learn. It means choosing to build bridges, never walls.
3. Choosing to trust Jesus in the leadership He has put in place...not because they are perfect, but because they, too, are seeking His wisdom in spite of (and because of) their awareness of their own need for His grace and mercy.
4. Choosing to believe that God is in control...that He loves us enough as part of His church to get us where He wants us to be. And that this is where WE want to be, too.
5. That feelings just ARE...not good, not bad, just real. And our Father God not only understands that, but it is the way He made us. He never tells us how we should feel...He does tell us how we should act. And often that is in spite of our feelings.

For the past year I have also been part of another church, another group of God's people intent on following Him in community, service, and practice. This church family is called The Well. It is in Brussels, Belgium and is made up of followers of Jesus (and those who are seeking but have not yet found) from all over the world. People are represented from every continent except Antarctica and from over two dozen countries.

Lots of accents, cultures, perspectives...but the bottom line challenge is the same: how do we live and grow in Jesus as a community of believers? We make mistakes. We bring our own issues and shortcomings with us. We work at unity. We contend for love and acceptance. We know that only by giving up our wants to embrace HIS will and His way will we mature and become like Jesus, able to reflect His life and light to those around us.

My challenge to the Chapel? Just this: Love when it isn't easy; trust Jesus in each other even when we don't agree; be willing to die to ourselves, even when we are sure we are in the right.

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