

Holding Tight

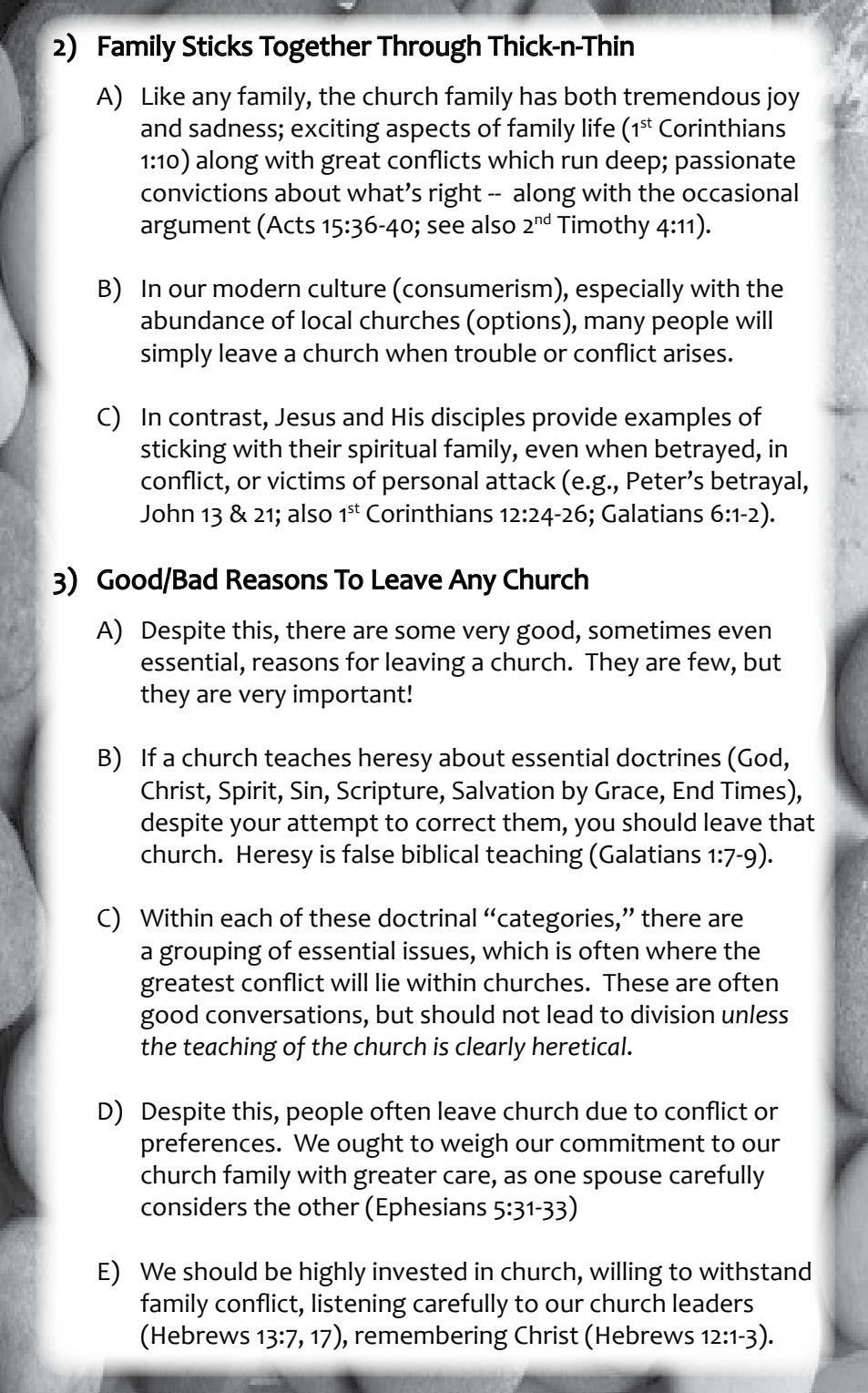
Long Beach Alliance Church • July 15th, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

~Hebrews 10:23-25 (NASB)

1) The Church Is A Family

- A) In the past two thousand years, the church has gone from a rag-tag house-church movement led by the disciples of Jesus Christ, to the powerful cathedrals and mind-boggling power of the Catholic Church, to the radical Protestant Reformation resulting in churches on every corner, to the extraordinary growth of Christianity around the world with mega-churches, house-churches, and everything between.
- B) But of course, the church is not made up of buildings (Acts 7:48). In the Bible, the church was made-up of people who were gathered together in worship of God (Acts 2:46-47), through a relationship with Jesus Christ, living in spiritual insight and power by the Holy Spirit (1st Peter 1:2; 2nd Corinthians 13:14). The church is not a place, it's a people (1st Corinthians 1:2).
- C) When Jesus and His disciples spoke of the church, they used familial language and examples (Matthew 12:46-50; Ephesians 1:5; James 2:14-17). In other words, the church is not just people, it is the family of God (1st Timothy 3:15).



2) Family Sticks Together Through Thick-n-Thin

- A) Like any family, the church family has both tremendous joy and sadness; exciting aspects of family life (1st Corinthians 1:10) along with great conflicts which run deep; passionate convictions about what's right -- along with the occasional argument (Acts 15:36-40; see also 2nd Timothy 4:11).
- B) In our modern culture (consumerism), especially with the abundance of local churches (options), many people will simply leave a church when trouble or conflict arises.
- C) In contrast, Jesus and His disciples provide examples of sticking with their spiritual family, even when betrayed, in conflict, or victims of personal attack (e.g., Peter's betrayal, John 13 & 21; also 1st Corinthians 12:24-26; Galatians 6:1-2).

3) Good/Bad Reasons To Leave Any Church

- A) Despite this, there are some very good, sometimes even essential, reasons for leaving a church. They are few, but they are very important!
- B) If a church teaches heresy about essential doctrines (God, Christ, Spirit, Sin, Scripture, Salvation by Grace, End Times), despite your attempt to correct them, you should leave that church. Heresy is false biblical teaching (Galatians 1:7-9).
- C) Within each of these doctrinal "categories," there are a grouping of essential issues, which is often where the greatest conflict will lie within churches. These are often good conversations, but should not lead to division unless *the teaching of the church is clearly heretical*.
- D) Despite this, people often leave church due to conflict or preferences. We ought to weigh our commitment to our church family with greater care, as one spouse carefully considers the other (Ephesians 5:31-33)
- E) We should be highly invested in church, willing to withstand family conflict, listening carefully to our church leaders (Hebrews 13:7, 17), remembering Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3).