

The Family Code

Convictions of the FSU XA Family

I've heard it once said that the more relationship you have, the less need for rules. As a parent, though, I realize that my kids need to understand expectations. They thrive in them. As time goes on and they (and we) age, we have less need for a lot of rules. Trust deepens. Respect grows. Love overshadows all. They desire to please God and us. We desire to see them grow into the young men and women that God wants them to be. Rules get replaced over time with convictions - time-tested, trust-dependent, God-centered. These are the convictions for what the Chi Alpha family looks like...

The Family Code

March together.

Fight for, not against.

Stoop low, so someone else can rise.

Choose unselfishly for the highest good of God and His kingdom.

Give grace.

Abandon all masks.

March together. (Common Cause)

What makes Chi Alpha any different than any other club or organization? Chi Alpha is a fellowship of people that have come to believe that there is really something at stake. There really is an eternal battle and the souls of young men and women are at stake, on our own campus and beyond. We cannot just look out for ourselves. We may not have the same personalities, but we are governed by the same mission: Reconciling students to Christ... transforming the university, the marketplace and the world. This will only happen if we march together.

Read: Acts 9:26-31 – Barnabas introduces Paul to the Jerusalem Church

- Why was it such a big deal for Barnabas to vouch for Saul (later Paul)?
- What was the effect of the Jerusalem church welcoming Saul?
- How can we *march together* as a Life Group?

Fight for, not against. (Loyalty/Commitment)

Contextually the entire book of Ephesians repeatedly discusses relationships, including the great mystery that Jesus was endeavoring to accomplish through the Cross - the mystery of "together." Jews and Gentiles would be "heirs *together*..., members *together* of one body, and sharers *together* in the promise in Christ Jesus" (3:6). Even as Paul outlines who we are (individually and collectively) in the first three chapters, he explains how we live that out in the last three. He gives specific relationship examples (husband/wife, father/children, master/slave), and then in chapter 6 he shares the armor. Much of the "day of evil" that will come will be meant to destroy the relationships and community in Christ that God has brought together. That's the avenue through which God works - His body, His people! And that's probably why there is no

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armor for the back. That is our role, to other people and in prayer. But if, when the day of evil comes, we can get our eyes upon other people (flesh and blood), Satan will have already won. Fight *for* one another, not *against* one another.

Read: 1 Samuel 20:27-34, 35-42 – David & Jonathan

- How did David and Jonathan display *fighting for, not against*?
- What are some practical ways we can fight for one another, not against one another?

Stoop low, so someone else can rise. (Honor)

Honor is not always a fun thing to talk about. If we stoop, someone else will get attention. If we stoop, someone else's gifts and abilities may be recognized, or may grow, while ours may go unnoticed. But we remember John the Baptist, perhaps the most widely known Rabbi pointing to Jesus and saying, "He must become greater; I must become less." We also remember Jesus humbling himself to death, even death on a cross. Stooping low, so others can rise is in our spiritual DNA. It was modeled by our King. May honor mark our way.

Read: John 3:26-30, John 13:1-8, 9-16

- What do we learn through John the Baptist's example of *stooping low* so Jesus could rise?
- What do we learn through Jesus' modeling *stooping low so someone else can rise*?
- Who have I seen display this kind of honor?

Choose unselfishly for the highest good of God and His Kingdom. (Love)

This is counter to our culture. Our culture has a mentality that says, "*I deserve to have.*" It may be to have a certain status, respect, food, relationship, or whatever. The Gospel preaches a love mentality that says, "*I desire to give.*" God is love and He rules His kingdom on the basis of His love. He acts out of that love towards all people. Our service to Him may be called an unselfish act, but the reality is that His love is so great that He blesses us even through our loving others. Choosing unselfishly for the highest good of God and His kingdom is lived out in loving our brothers and sisters... following Jesus' New Commandment, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). We bear the mark of the Kingdom, when we choose to unselfishly love one another.

Read: Esther 4:10-16 – Esther; Acts 4:32-35 – Believers in the early church

- How did Esther *choose unselfishly for the highest good of God and His Kingdom*?
- How did the early church display love for one another?
- Who in your life chooses unselfishly for the highest good of God and His Kingdom? How do you know they do?

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Give grace. (Forgiveness/no bitterness)

We will all face disappointment. We will all face distrust. We will all face evil. And we may face that amongst our brothers and sisters. What will our response be? Forgiveness is at the core of our faith. Jesus modeled it better than any...even in the midst of dying on the Cross - "Father, forgive them." We must follow the way of our Master. We must be ready to always give grace. Forgiveness must be our constant companion (not 7 times, but 70*7 times). Bitterness must be our bitter enemy. There is no greater root to destroy the life of a family than bitterness. It clings, it binds, it holds. And it will not let go, until we let it go, forgive, and give grace. Andrew Murray says it this way in his book, Humility, "let us prove our Christlikeness, not only in our zeal for saving the lost, but before in all of our (interactions) with the brethren, forbearing and forgiving one another, even as the Lord forgave us."

Read: Acts 15:36-40 – Paul, Barnabas, Mark; Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11 – Paul/Mark's restoration

- What can we learn through Paul and Barnabas' disagreement about Mark? And their later restoration of relationship?
- Has my life group lived out *giving grace* well? How have I contributed to that?
- Who do I need to extend grace to this week?

Abandon all masks. (Honesty, naked & unashamed)

Pretense, deception, arrogance, pride, and masks are all walls. They are all dividers. They all limit relationship. They all deny depth. Perhaps this is why Jesus' straightforward teaching was so astonishing, why he was declared to be one who taught with authority. There was no pretense. He was who he was. It's what separated Him from the Pharisees (whom He called "whitewashed tombs" - clean on the outside, dead on the inside) or indicted those arresting Him for coming at night under cover of darkness instead of during the day as Jesus taught at the temple. You see this replicated in His apostles - Paul constantly admits that he is weak, but He also boasts about Jesus' strength. He does not glorify weakness, but glorifies Christ's strength in the midst of it. This is the potential of abandoning all masks - Jesus gets to show forth His great strength.

Read: 2 Cor. 12:7-10 – Paul's weakness

- According to Paul, what is the value in our weaknesses?
- Are there masks you have on to hide what's really going on in your heart and life? Why?
- How can we abandon all masks within our life group?

Final Thoughts

Paul seemed to rejoice in the life and witness of the Thessalonians. He writes to them in 1 Thessalonians 2:8,12:

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“...so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well...encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

This is our invitation to you as well, to live out this Family Code as a family and an army. We believe it breaks down Jesus' prayer, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” May His kingdom come. May we live worthy of our King.

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Discussion Questions:

1. Of the 6 convictions of the Family Code which excites you the most and why?
2. Which do you want to grow in the most? Which of them do you find to be most challenging?
3. How well does your Life Group live up to the Family Code? How could you begin to model a change?