

The Family of God

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God designed people to live in families. From the moment a baby draws its first breath, it is part of a family. Due to sin, relationships may be marred or broken, but God's design was that every person would have a family in which to live, to love to belong, to give, and to grow. Christ's church is a family.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19) [All Scripture unless otherwise noted is from NKJV.]

God has welcomed us into His household, and called us His children.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!...Beloved, now we are the children of God. (I John 3:1a,2a)

Each born again believer is part of a large household, a large family, which includes every other born again believer. Our call is to walk in love towards our Father, edifying one another, and reaching out to others to help the family grow.

Often, the word "family" first brings to mind a picture of two parents with a child or two. The reality of the "family" is bigger. I like to think of a family reunion. My mother's family was a sociable lot, and between her four brothers, three sisters, their spouses and children, my grandparents, a few great-aunts and great-uncles, our family, and maybe a few extra friends, our family reunions were always quite lively. There was enough food to feed three times the attendees, and children zooming in and out among clustered adult conversations. From a babe in arms to young children to teenagers, to college students to young singles to newly married to older couples to the ninety-three year old great-aunt, everyone was part of the family, was welcome, was special, was valued. Year by year, people grew and changed; some passed away, others married, children were born. A family is varied, and always changing.

God's family is no different. He has called us to be a part of a great and glorious family, made up of unique individuals, bound together by a common love and a common Father. In order to help explain this relationship, He uses the analogy of a human body.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye can not say to the hand, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having giving greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (I Cor. 12: 12-27)

Each member of God's family is unique, special and needed. We are bound together by the Spirit of God which lives within us, the seed of our Father. In order to help us live together God gives us instruction as to how to live life as a believer: First and foremost, He gives us instruction on how to get born again. Then He teaches us how to commit our lives to Him; how to walk in love toward each other.

This is the foundation. It's pointless to be concerned with the details of Christian marriage if you haven't attempted the basics of unselfishness, forgiveness, renewed mind and encouragement. How can you walk as a single believer without a renewed mind, self-control and the love of God? But, having this foundation, specific instruction can help us enjoy richer relationships, avoid temptations and contribute in ways that befit our particular abilities and stage in life.

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not given to slander, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. (Titus 2:1-8)

The family of God is a dynamic crew. Individuals are always growing and changing – changing individually and in their relationships with one another. It's not a matter of one kind of relationship being more "spiritual" than another; it's living for God in whatever state we find ourselves.

But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were

bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called. Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. (1 Cor. 7:17ff)

The Greek word for "remain" is also frequently translated "abide" or "dwell." Verse 24 makes the intent clear: "let each one remain (abide, dwell) with God in that calling in which he was called." No matter what state we happen to be in, we are to focus on dwelling with God, and as the changes happen, we are to continue to abide with God.

Not only do we need to understand our own roles, we need to understand each other. As a husband, I not only need to understand what I should do as a husband, but I need to understand what the Word says about being a wife, so that I know what to expect. Then I can help and encourage my wife to be her best. Even if I'm not married, I need to know what the Word says about serving as a single person, to teach and help and encourage that single believer to stand for Christ.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col.3:16)

We walk in love today, helping one another, and looking forward to our great "family reunion."

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

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