

A family of believers

Traditionally church is a building to go to on a Sunday or also once during the week to sing worship songs, hear a sermon and go home. This cycle is repeated every week. Is this what Jesus expected his church to become? The church is called the body of Christ, a flock, and the people of God. It is also called the family of believers. All these analogies give us a sense of belonging to each other. We are all believers in Christ who are brothers and sisters who belong to one Father.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1) Family is part of God's plan

- When God called the nation of Israel to be his own possession he didn't call a political nation of unrelated people. He in essence called a family.
 - His call was to Abraham, who gave birth to Isaac, who gave birth to Jacob, who gave birth to 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - When we talk about a community we talk about a combination of families.
 - The family is the smallest unit of a community and so where the family values are strong the community is strong. Where the family values are weak the community is weak.
- When God called Abraham – the nation of Israel – it was the beginning of his plan of redemption.
- The idea of family, however, didn't start then. It started in the Garden of Eden when God put Adam and Eve together as husband and wife.
 - The original purpose of family wasn't for redemption, but it was God's structure for society and children. Children aren't born to just anyone in society, but within the family structure.
 - With the breakdown of the family in today's world we can start to understand why society is as dysfunctional as it is.
- Although the purpose of family wasn't primarily for redemptive purposes God intends to redeem the family unit to restore a godly structure to society.
- How and where does he do this?
 - The church, as God's redeemed people to whom He's restoring His values.
 - The New Testament, which is written to and for the church, is full of references to family, family relationships, and family structure.
 - The church ought to bear practical testimony of what a godly family looks like as each believing family aligns itself to the Word of God on family values and structure.
- Besides individual families we are told that the church as a whole is the family of God.
 - 1 Peter 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the **family of believers**, fear God, honor the emperor.
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of **God's family** throughout Macedonia.

2) Becoming part of the family of believers

- When talking to people of other religions we often hear the phrase "we are all God's children".
 - This isn't true as we are born sinners separated from God.
- Jesus was very direct regarding this point when speaking to the Jews who opposed him
 - John 8:42-44 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- John, who was Jesus' closest disciple, reiterated what Jesus said in one of his letters, but in a different way.
 - 1 John 3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.
- So then how do become part of the family of believers?
 - By faith in Jesus and what he did for us on the cross
 - ◆ John 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.
 - ◆ Galatians 3:26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.
 - We have been adopted as children of God
 - ◆ Ephesians 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will
- Through faith and having been adopted as children of God we are now of the same family as Jesus.
 - Hebrews 2:11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

3) A functional family of believers

- As stated earlier the family is being restored in both structure and relationship.
- Structure
 - Christ is the head of the church
 - Man is the head of the wife but needs to love his wife as Christ loved the churches
 - The wife is to submit to the headship of her husband.
 - Father's are to bring up their children in the Lord
 - Children are to obey their parents
 - ◆ Ephesians 5:22-25 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.
- Relationship
 - The fruit of salvation, and that we are now part of the family of God is that we love one another.
 - ◆ 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.
 - This love is worked out in different ways:
 - ◆ Titus 2:2-8 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
 - As we are moulded together as a family of believers, treating each other in godly ways, caring for one another as Christ cares for us, we will become the example that Christ wants us to be in and to the world around us.