
Why Church?

Part 3 – Family Matters

God Reveals Himself in Community – Father, Son and Spirit

In the beginning, God was already there. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were already there when the world and everything in it was created. There has always been a relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and there has always been 'family'. This is the supernatural nature of God and the vision that He carries for human relationships.

Genesis 1:27

God is uncreated, and creates everything that exists, and He has created us in His image – so the bond of mutual love, honour, intimacy and service modelled in how Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to one another, really does set the tone for the way we can connect with both God and one another.

John 3:35; John 5:19; John 14:7, 16-17; Matthew 3:16-17

Family is God's idea – He ordained it.

2 Corinthians 6:18

God is the Father from whom all fatherhood derives its meaning, inspiration and example.

Ephesians 3:14-19

What an incredible picture of love and family. But sadly, all too often, poor examples in the world, of a fractured or challenging family life, have cheated people out of the experience of real relationship, that should provide love, identity and security. For so many, their experience of family and parents have left them disconnected, isolated, perhaps vulnerable, scared, angry, wounded or numb. For many, their experience of Church has not been one where inclusion, forgiveness, support, encouragement, sacrifice and love flowed.

This brokenness was never God's intention.

From the very beginning of scripture in Genesis (Genesis 1:27), to the end in Revelation (Revelation 7:9, 19:6-9), from the end of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:6) to the start of the New Testament found in the gospels accounting for Jesus' generational lineage and life – God shows us repeatedly, **that Family Matters** and that He is focused on the restoration and regathering of His family unto Himself.

The Church, God's Church, is not *like a family*, it *is a family*, a *kingdom family*.

Members of the Household of God

"Church" is the translation of the Greek term *"ekklesia"*, is used in the New Testament to identify the community or family of believers in Jesus Christ. **God's household** is not a building or facility, but rather **a family of people...**

Ephesians 2:19

When we look at scripture, and examine what God highlights, what He emphasises and prioritises when it comes to His family gathered, His Church... A family of people who are known as **devoted worshippers** of the Almighty God.

John 4:23-24

A family of people, thankful, united, who live in and from a place of **authentic relationship abounding in compassion, mercy, grace, forgiveness and peace, all bound together with love** – people who go after the disengaged, the prodigals, calling those sons and daughters home

Colossians 3:12-17; 2 Corinthians 3:16-17

A spirit-filled people motivated to REACH out to their frontlines and beyond, even to the frontiers where the gospel has yet to be heard, reaching out to the lonely, the lost and the orphan; sharing the good news and inviting them into His family.

Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20

Spiritually mature transformed people, taking up their God given responsibility for growth, emerging as spiritual mothers and fathers, willing and equipped to make disciples who make disciples.

Colossians 1:28; 2 Peter 1:3-11; James 2:14-17

A family generously giving, serving and loving each other, not preoccupied with their own needs, rather, pouring out their lives as a drink offering.

Philippians 2:17; Acts 2:42-47

Discovering Family Through Connection

Christ removed all barriers, removed the walls that kept us separated and divided and unified all believers into His family (singular)! The emphasis through scripture is on unity and love and living in harmony with one

another, in accordance with what God says in His Word. That His cross should be the focus of our unity and the entry into His household.

Ephesians 2:13

Christ destroyed the barriers people build between themselves because none could earn or merit salvation – it was a gift to be freely received. Because of God's great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made a way for us to live through Christ, even while we were disobedient, dead in sin and deserving of wrath.

Through Christ's death, we are all one (Ephesians 2:14); our hostility against each other has been put to death (Ephesians 2:16); we can all have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18); we are no longer foreigners or aliens to God rather we are members of God's family, members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19); being built into a holy temple with Christ as our chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

God is calling us, as His Church, His family, to reflect who He is and His life through our relationships with one-another.

John 13:34-35

Working Together - As One Family

God has given His Church an enormous responsibility – to make disciples in every nation.

Matthew 28:18-20

The gift of the Holy Spirit releases in us each a unique expression of spiritual gifts, that increasingly get activated as we mature spiritually, for encouraging, strengthening and building up the church.

Ephesians 4:11-15

God places us in both natural and spiritual 'family' to bring us to a place of maturity. The 'mission' of the family is bringing people into the fullness of their identity in Christ, into maturity... and to multiply.

1 Corinthians 4:15

In Gods family, the Church, it is our responsibility to nurture, protect, resource, equip and disciple those born new into the family of God, through infancy, the early years, thriving in an environment of love and support that accelerates them into a place of spiritual maturity.

When we view the church as anything other than FAMILY – it stunts the journey to maturity and Christlikeness in our lives.

Our love for one another IS WORSHIP to God.

The greatest command is that you love the Lord God with heart, soul and strength

Matthew 22:37

The second command is like the first, Love your neighbour (the 'other') as you love yourself.

Mark 12:30-31

Then comes a new commandment – Love one another

John 15:12-15

When we love one another, those who don't know Jesus see we don't just proclaim it, we are good news, and they want to join us in a real family, in real relationship. People are so hungry for this connection, love, family!

Discussion Questions

1. What would it take, for us to be so unified and bound by love so deeply (to the degree that the father and son are one it tells us in John 17) that our neighbour, or work colleague, or friend, or 'stranger' was attracted to Jesus, because of our love for one another they witnessed... and they said 'wow – I just have to be part of that!'
2. What are Jesus expectations of us... as His ambassadors, His family, representing Him?
3. Read Acts 2:42-47. How was the early Church experiencing God's spiritual family to the fullest. What part did loving one another play, in the awakening and revival they witnessed?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 4:15. Why is it important to grow and mature from spiritual children into engaged spiritual mothers and fathers? What happens to the church if we don't?
5. Read 1 John 4:7-10. How do you share with others the love that God has shown you?

Can you explain to another, how they can go from being an orphan to responding in faith to the invitation Jesus makes to everyone, to be adopted into God's family?