

## A Family of Love 6-29-03

*God is the One who made all things, and all things are for his glory. He wanted to have many children share his glory.* Hebrews 2:10a (NCV)

We've been considering the fact that God made us for His glory. Last week we saw His desire for us to enter into a friendship relationship with Him. This week we are going to look at the wonderful relationship of being in His family. God's main purpose for your life is to glorify Him, but we could add to this a secondary purpose: He formed you to be His own family. The entire Bible is the story of God forming a family. *"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure."* Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

God is love (1 John 1:8). He is a relational God. He describes Himself in family terms, the Father, Son and Spirit. To that Family, God determined to adopt you and me. *"It was a happy day for him when he gave us our new lives, through the truth of his Word, and we became, as it were, the first children in his new family."* James 1:18 (LB) By trusting in the work of Jesus on your behalf, to make you right with God, you entered into His family. He is your Father. Jesus is your brother. Other Christians throughout time are your brothers and sisters. *"You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* Galatians 3:26 (NLT) This relationship is more lasting than the universe in which we live. It is eternal.

As you entered into the family of God, you received some incredible rights. You have the family name, Christian; you have a family resemblance, privileges, intimate access, and a family inheritance. In fact, the Bible says, *"Since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you."* Galatians 4:7b (NLT) And He has everything! The Apostle Paul said, *"I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people."* Ephesians 1:18b (NLT) Any one of our privileges in Christ would be incredible, but add them all together and we are overwhelmed, imagery overload, with all that it means to be in God's family.

This eternal inheritance that is kept safely in heaven (1 Peter 1:4 (NLT)) is what we should be looking forward to. Some people look forward to getting to a good financial position, or retirement, or a special vacation. Get a glimpse of what God has in store for His children and everything else fades in the shadows of it. Paul also said, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward."* Colossians 3:23-24a (NIV) A glimpse of the greatness of that reward helps us to live in the light of eternity. Everything else becomes shortsighted. Some time in the near future I hope to share with you how dominant the reward theme is in the New Testament.

When you join the family of God there is an initiation right that the Bible calls baptism. We took that word right from the Greek. In plain English we might say

**Commented [notes1]:** <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.  
1 John 4:8 (NIV)

something like “dipped into” or “immersed in”. You have been immersed into the Family of God, and so, you make it known to the world by a symbolic act. In the first century, other groups besides Christians did baptisms. Everyone understood that it meant you were immersing yourself into a new way of life.

Today we often have baptisms in church settings where no one outside the family of God observes it. I would prefer to see us use a public setting. How about Slide Rock? If you think it might be a little intimidating, consider that in the first century some people came up out of the baptism waters and were carried away by Roman soldiers to their death. That is how much entering into the family of God meant to them. We need a restoration of the reality of the importance and privilege of that decision.

In the Bible, they wasted no time in being baptized. As soon as someone made a decision for Christ, they were baptized. The Ethiopian eunuch did it on the spot. The thousands at Pentecost did it that day. The Philippian jailer and his family were baptized at midnight!

In Jesus’ final words to us, the Great Commission, He told us to go and make disciples and baptize them. Why is baptism so important? The making of disciples is fulfilling the first purpose for our lives, glorifying God. Making disciples helps more people live what they were created for. What then, is baptism about? It is our second great purpose for living, entering into and being a part of God’s family. Baptism says, “I’m into this. It is my life. I have a new family.”

The act of baptism is rich with meaning. As you go into the water, you are identifying with the death and burial of Christ. As you come up out of the water you are identifying with His new life. You are telling everyone you have a new life in Christ as a part of the family of God. *"Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into Christ's body by one Spirit, and we have all received the same Spirit."*  
1 Corinthians 12:13 (NLT) Faith in Christ makes you a part of God’s family; baptism shows you have made that decision of faith.

It is important that you understand that God is proud to have you as a son or daughter of God, because you have Christ’s righteousness. Trusting Christ means you trust that what He did for you was enough to satisfy God. Jesus takes your sin and gives you His righteousness. You aren’t yet made perfect, but when God looks upon you, He sees the righteousness of Christ. Don’t fear not measuring up, in Christ you measure up. But by ourselves, none of us do. Strive for righteousness, because of all that God has done for you. But rest in what Jesus did for you. Let the power of the new life of Christ in you help you, but don’t feel you’re a failure when you don’t succeed. You are a success in Jesus. Whew!

*"Jesus pointed to his disciples and said, 'These are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!'"* Matthew 12:49-50 (NLT) You did the will of God when you believed on Jesus. If you ever feel insignificant, unloved, or insecure, remember that your Father is God. He chose you. One reason adopted children are so special is that their parents had a choice. God chose you. Don't forget it. A son of the King is a prince. A daughter of the King is a princess. That's why I call my wife Princess. Try to grasp what a great privilege it is being included in the family of God.

Just like our earthly families, our spiritual family has struggles. We fight and argue and even refuse to speak at times, but we better get over it, because family is family. You can wish I wasn't your brother in Christ, but if you are in Christ, there is no way around it, so we better get over it. We have to not only learn to be patient and get along, but we must love each other. Twice in John 15, Jesus said that His command (singular) was to love each other (John 15:12,17). Why only one command? You can't keep that command without loving God first and secondly, yielding to His Spirit. Then He said that if you love Him you would obey that command. Those who refuse to love their brothers are refusing to love Christ. I may not agree with them, but I have to love them to stay faithful to Christ. <sup>10</sup>*If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.* <sup>11</sup>*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* <sup>12</sup>*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* <sup>13</sup>*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* <sup>14</sup>*You are my friends if you do what I command.* John 15:10-14 (NIV)

Because God is love, the most important lesson we can learn is how to love. In loving others we are most like God. That should be our family resemblance. Peter writes, *"Show special love for God's people."* 1 Peter 2:17b (CEV) Paul says the same thing in Galatians 6:10 (NCV) *"When we have the opportunity to help anyone, we should do it. But we should give special attention to those who are in the family of believers."* God wants His children to bear the family resemblance of love more than any other quality. It is to be our distinguishing characteristic. *"Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples."* John 13:35 (LB) This ability doesn't come naturally. It must be developed through difficulty and tests. You are going to be with your spiritual family forever. We better learn to love one another. That is why it is important for us to worship and fellowship with one another. The writer of Hebrews had to remind them not to give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). Why would they want to give up? It's because when we meet we find out the areas in our lives that we are still selfish, irritating, and frustrating to others. Meeting together exposes our lack of patience, love, and other faults.

Love is the most important part of your life. *"Let love be your greatest aim."* 1 Corinthians 14:1a (LB) Being a loving person can't just be one of the things you aspire to, it must be your ultimate goal. As we continue to gather to worship

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<sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other.  
John 15:12,17 (NIV)

we learn three important lessons. The first lesson is this: Life without love is really worthless. You can hide out in the country and not have personal conflict, but you will find that you are not maturing. Without interaction with others, especially other believers, your life is not about any thing of eternal value. You are just avoiding pain out of fear. Fear is not of God. You can't learn to love without interaction. *"No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love."* 1 Corinthians 13:3b

We try to fit time for relationships into our schedule when life is really about relationships. It is first and foremost your relationship with God, but that naturally overflows into your relationship with others. *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart..." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."* Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT) The busyness of life seems to crowd out the time for relationships, but we can't let it. Relationships must be our priority. Remember, life minus love equals zero!

Secondly, love will last forever. No wonder it should be a priority. *"These three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love."* 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NCV) Listen to this quote from Mother Teresa, "It's not what you do, but how much love you put into it that matters." When someone is on their deathbed, they don't ask to see their diplomas, their bank statements, awards or honors; they want to see the people they love and that love them. Don't wait till then to learn that lesson. Nothing will matter to you more than relationships.

The third reason to make learning to love a life goal is that God will grade your life on your love. When you arrive in heaven, God isn't going to ask you about your hobbies, your business, or your education; He's going to want to know how you treated people and cared for their practical needs. *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."* Matthew 25:40 NRSV There are no U-hauls behind a hearse. The only thing you will take with you is your character, and *"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* Galatians 5:6 (NIV) Since faith expressing itself through love is all that counts, we would be wise to ask the Holy Spirit to help us learn to love God and our fellow man.

I'm going to tell you something that causes us in the modern world to cringe. The way to spell love is T-I-M-E. We pay people for the hours of their life. What is most valuable to us is our time. You can tell what someone values by how they spend their time, even more than where they spend their money. Giving your time to someone is investing a part of your life that you will never get back. It is our most precious commodity. To love God and others then means to spend time doing so.

I say that causes us to cringe because we have so little time. We are harried and hurried and hasty because we have so many demands on our time. Where do these demands come from? Honestly speaking they usually come from our own desires. I work more hours because I desire more money. I over commit because I want others to think well of me. I spend too much time in front of the TV because I desire to be entertained. Jesus says there are 12 hours of daylight (John 11:9). We all have a 24-hour day. The problem is our priorities. If we rearrange our priorities to match our purpose for living, we will find God has given us enough time to do what matters most. Even that can sometimes get hectic, but we can rest assured that He will not give us too much. Too much to do means we added an unnecessary priority or two.

**Commented [notes4]:** <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. John 11:9 (NIV)

Men, we have difficulty understanding this concept. Our family is thankful for our provision and protection, but they'd rather have our time. The best gift you can give another family member is not diamonds, or a car, or dinner out, it's your undivided attention, our focus, and our time. Jesus modeled this. *"Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave Himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins."* Ephesians 5:2 (LB)

Love always costs us personally. *"My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action."* 1 John 3:18 (TEV) We usually have to give up something of our own desire or possession to truly express love. That is what God did for us when He gave His own Son. It is in giving that you are really blessed and receive the most of what matters.

We can procrastinate in many areas of our lives, but when it comes to love, never put it off. *"Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone."* Galatians 6:10 (NLT) *"Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. Never tell your neighbor to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now."* Proverbs 3:17 (TEV) Why now? You never know how long you or your loved ones have. We aren't guaranteed tomorrow. How will you explain to God that you put your desires before relationships? Who has come to mind that you need to start spending time with? Our culture is driving us into an isolation that is robbing us of the greatest treasures in life, relationships. What needs to get cut from your schedule to make it possible? "The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now." Rick Warren

Next Sunday we will not meet here. We will be meeting at Red Rock High Gymnasium. I hope you can all make it. There will be a special presentation to Wayside Chapel. The service begins at 10 A.M. – NOT 10:30! Join us on the patio for refreshments. Let's close by singing again Oh How He Loves You and Me. (Someone will be up front to pray for those in need of prayer)