

008 The Church as a Family

In the Western world we have a real difficulty in understanding the true family concept. Those in Eastern or Asian countries don't have such a problem.

Our upbringing, our relationship with our parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles all color our understanding of family.

Our parents may have been good people but non-Christians. They may have been drunkards and beat us or abused us physically or verbally. They may have been so busy that they didn't have time to build any real relationship with us. They may have been introverted and shy sort of people. They may have been extroverted and loud, outgoing, always on the go people. Maybe dad was in the military or in prison and away from home for months or even years at a time. You can see there are many things in life that shape our understanding of family.

One of our major challenges with all this is that we see our Heavenly Father through the eyes of our particular upbringing and concept.

Further down the study line, Brian Hayes is presenting a section or mini-series on the Father's Heart so we will not go any further in this line except to establish a framework that forms our thoughts of a family

We have to look beyond our own experience and see what our Heavenly Father is after.

We have to start at the beginning yet again.

Gen 1:26-27

*26 God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them **reflecting our nature** So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."*

*27 God created human beings; he created them godlike, **Reflecting God's nature.** He created them **male and female.**
(from THE MESSAGE:*

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Gen 2:7

7 the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

NIV

The concept of family comes from the creative heart of God and born by His own breath.

Within the family concept the command was: -

Gen 1:28

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

NIV

The desire in Father's Heart was to have a company of people in relationship with Him, with each other and identifiable.

Take Abraham for example.

Gen 14:14

14 When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all, and chased after the retiring army as far as Dan.

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Although Abraham didn't have a son of his own at this time, he had a family, a household and he was able to draw 318 men of his household, able to fight to set Lot free.

In the Old Testament the word 'House' is the nearest word to our 'Family'. It can mean a husband and wife and children. It can be enlarged to cover a situation like Abraham's, or larger like "The House or Family of Israel".

Another aspect of family was that of 'kinsfolk'. Marriage was normally within the family kinsfolk. Abraham sent his servant back to his kinsfolk to find a wife for his son Isaac. Jacob did the same thing.

The strength of 'family' or 'kinsfolk' responsibility was shown by Abraham's actions here. Also what the kinsfolk expected from each other is portrayed here too. Lot expected protection, defense and support. They were willing to go to war and give up their lives for their 'family' kinsfolk.

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The understanding of father was important because the family line and authority stems from this.

The nation of Israel is called 'the family of Israel'. In Jesus day they still referred to 'our father Abraham'. They saw themselves still as part of the family line stemming from Abraham.

The eldest son in the family received a double portion of the family inheritance and received the authority as head of the household, which included brothers and sisters and their immediate families, all servants and their children and all animals and livestock.

If one of the family members fell into the hands of the creditors, the nearest relative was required to redeem him and his property.

If someone was murdered, then the nearest kinsman had to take vengeance on behalf of the 'family'. Now perhaps you can see why God was so displeased with Esau for selling his birthright as the eldest son for a bowl of soup. He treated his blessing as head of the household and the authority that came with it, with disdain and gave it up for soup.

Then there is the story of Ruth in the Old Testament, which depicts the next of kinsman's obligation to raise up seed to a dead brother who had no children.

God took Abraham from his father's house and homeland and broke the heathen system to start a fresh whole new line through Isaac, through Jacob and then through the twelve sons of Jacob who were the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the fullness of time, Jesus came and did the same as Abraham did. Jesus was the eldest son of Joseph and Mary and would have taken the role of head of the family.

Instead the chain was broken again.

God the Father took on a whole new line in Christ. Not in the natural, but in the supernatural. Not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

The Heavenly Father doesn't die – He is the Eternal God Almighty.

Jesus is His first-born and inheritor of all things and receives the Authority of the Father to administer and lead the family.

Matt 28:18

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Rom 8:29

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

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There is a wonderful verse here where Jesus opens all that the Father is to this new group of believers after his resurrection.

John 20:17

*17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and **your** Father, to my God and your God.'"*

NIV

Jesus had always called God, his Father. Now He opened the Father up and said He is my Father and now He has become your Father, He is my God and He is also your God.

Rom 8:14-17

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

15 And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family, and calling to him, "Father, Father."

16 For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we really are God's children.

17 And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for all God gives to his Son Jesus is now ours too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

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The message puts it this way.

Rom 8:14-17

God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

15 This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?"

16 God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.

17 And we know we are going to get what's coming to us — an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

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- Now we are really one family. We have the same Father and God. I am your elder brother and the firstborn amongst so many brothers. The responsibility of the firstborn I gladly accept as your nearest kinsman.

The word 'adoption' is not the same as the modern day thought of adoption. The Greek word here gives the understanding of 'blood transfusion'. We are not adopted into the family of God because of a piece of paper agreeing that we now belong to someone else.

It means that we have become real children with the same 'genes' not on the basis of being divine, but on the basis of redemption. We have been 'born again' by the Spirit of God and are true family and carry the traits of God. 'Old things are passed away'. The traits of our former father – the devil – no longer exist in us. We are 100% sons of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. We are God's family, God's household.

What an exciting salvation.

We used to sing a chorus years ago "Cover me, Cover me extend the border of your garment over me. Because thou art my nearest kinsman"

Jesus as our nearest kinsman and having been given the task and the authority of God the Father, has fulfilled that protective, delivering, governing and covering role for us in His life, death, resurrection and ascension to the Father's side.

It's in this line that we are family together. What Jesus has done for us, we should have the same attitude towards each other, as in Christ we are blood brothers.

Eph 2:19

19 Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

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Gal 6:10

*10 Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.
(from THE MESSAGE)*

Our family line is in heaven. God is our Father. Jesus is our elder brother. We are God's children and family – brothers and sisters whose relationship together should surpass anything this earthly line could produce.

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1 Cor 12:25-27

25 The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, 26 the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

*27 You are Christ's body — that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything.
(from THE MESSAGE:*

This speaks in context of the body, but just the same in the context of ‘the family’ as we have seen in this study. One member of the family suffers; we all feel that and move to support. If one member is honored, then we have a ‘family’ party.

Lastly and most important. In John’s Gospel chapter 8, Jesus Himself points out that God is the Father of ONLY those who believe. Those who do not believe He say’s are of your father the devil.

Therefore as children of God we must make sure the family traits and character shows at all times.

Eph 3:14-21

14-15 When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan, I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of all the great family of God-some of them already in heaven and some down here on earth- 16 that out of his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you the mighty inner strengthening of his Holy Spirit.

17 And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; 18-19 and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself.

20 Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of-ininitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.

21 May he be given glory forever and ever through endless ages because of his master plan of salvation for the Church through Jesus Christ.

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See you in the next study.