

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST #3

Learning to Be the Family of God

THEME: The New Testament invites us to see and live a *personal relationship* with God that defines all other relationships in life. One of the metaphors used extensively is this: All who are children of God are also brothers and sisters to one another. The church is the Family of God. In this study, let's try to understand, embrace, and encourage one another to be a loving, supportive, and connected family.

ICE BREAKER

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term "family"? What is the best thing about the concept of family for you?
2. How do you translate this notion of your family by marriage and birth to your membership in the church as family?

THINK

1. Paul Tournier once claimed there are two things one cannot do *alone* – be married and be a Christian. What do you think he meant by that?
2. A New Testament term of importance here is "fellowship" (*koinonia*). How does this word relate to the idea of church as a spiritual family?
3. List some common issues that create tensions (and breakups!) in families. Do any of these same issues ever cause trouble in churches? Explain.
4. How does the Grace Chapel Church serve as a *family* context for you? How can we foster an even warmer and closer sense of belonging, acceptance, and safety for the members of our church family?
5. Before examining the biblical texts below, pray for The Divine Family of Father, Son, and Spirit to give insight to us for imitating the unity, love, and harmony of their perfect relationship in the life of our congregation.

EXAMINE

Read [Ephesians 5:21-33](#) as background to the following questions:

1. This text is often used as the basis for teaching young people about marriage and the family. (And that is certainly appropriate!) According to Paul, what is *his* theme in these verses? *Note: focus on v.32.*
2. Why do you think Paul chose the metaphor of marriage and family to help first-century Christians understand the meaning of being "members of [Christ's] body" (v.30)?
3. What one verse or key idea strikes you most forcefully from this text? How does that thought apply to our life together at Grace Chapel?
4. Discuss this statement in light of Ephesians 5:21-33: "We must not think of 'family' in terms of comfort and security alone. Families train children and challenge them to grow up and be productive adults. A 'church family' must be serious about growth, maturity, and life transformation."

Read [1 John 3:1](#) as background for discussing the following questions:

1. Have different members of your small group read this verse aloud. Let each reader try to use the tone and inflection he or she believes John was trying to communicate in writing these words.
2. As you have heard others reading these words aloud, share the impression that hearing these words has on you.
3. Read Mark 1:9-11. Do you see a connection between the Father's words from heaven at the baptism of Jesus and the affirmation in 1 John 3:1? Do you think it is possible that John is echoing this scene here?
4. Does anyone in the group remember the Fred Craddock story used in Sunday's sermon? It was the story about a "fatherless" child who was inspired to "claim your inheritance as a child of God" by the country preacher who seemed to sense his feelings of shame. Does that story give you any insight into this verse?

THIS WEEK: We are gearing up for a "family meeting" on *September 6* (5:30-7:30 pm) to begin the congregational process of seeking the Father's guidance to Grace Chapel's next preaching minister. First, be sure to mark your calendar and plan to be present. Second, begin praying now for the selection process. Third, pledge to participate in the information-gathering that will begin on that date – and in the selection process as it unfolds over the next few months. A *family* wants everyone to be included in its important decisions.