

The Family of God

Family is important and there are many things about life that we share with family. As Christians, we are also a part of the family of God.

Introduction

When I think of family, I think of brothers and sisters, mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, aunts and uncles, and lots of cousins. I think of people who share a common heritage and typically have a common outlook on life. I also think of people who share with one another freely and stand together against any threat or difficult circumstance.

I remember when I was a child, family was very important. We would visit all of the aunts, uncles, and cousins on one side of the family almost every Saturday; and just about every major holiday the whole other side of the family would get together for a huge picnic or dinner with games and all sorts of fun.

One set of my grandparents lived down the street from us when I was young. They had a very large house they raised their 7 kids in. After most of their children were grown, they started taking in foster children. Those foster children were every bit a part of the family as the rest of us. There was even talk about adopting some of them. Once adopted they would be a real permanent member of the family.

It is important to be part of a family. Family knows your imperfections and helps you overcome them with love and without condemnation. Family stands beside you and celebrates your successes and laments with your losses. Family is family and nothing breaks the bonds of family.

Not all families are this ideal. Most families have their issues, and some are bigger than others. If you are part of a family like that, we are sorry and would love to help you through that.

Being a part of the Church is being part of a family too. A family that stands together, lives together, and plays together, warts and all. John 1:12-13 says it so well.

John 1:12-13

(12) Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- (13) children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

When you are family, not only do you carry the family name, but there is an ancestry. There is an inheritance that is passed from one generation to the next. There are rights and responsibilities that go with being a part of a family. Being a part of the family of God is no different.

John is sharing with us exactly what Jesus did by giving up his life on the cross. When we accept the precious gift that he offers, life everlasting, by saying, "Yes!" to his call, we become children of God. We are adopted into the family of God. We get the name, we get a place at the table, and we get to celebrate and share with the rest of the family. We get to share in the inheritance.

The question is, are you wandering the streets as an orphan, are you a foster child living with someone's family but not a real part of it yet, or have you been adopted in? What do we mean by that? Let's look at the three.



Spiritual Orphans

Orphans are without family. They are alone in the world and often wander aimlessly. They have little to no purpose other than their daily survival. It is them against the world.

We see pictures of orphans in the news and depending on where you live, you may see orphans roaming the streets. They are begging for food, looking for shelter. They have no one to look out for and no one to look out for them. They are alone.

We are all spiritual orphans because of sin. We are separated from God and wandering through life aimlessly. We are concerned with our daily needs and ourselves and have little time for anyone or anything else.

In life, there are people who build orphanages. We have a friend who has built an orphanage in Haiti and runs it through donations from different churches here in America and Canada. Cell Life Church ministries in Pakistan, Kenya, and Zambia minister to orphans all the time, feeding them and providing education for them.

We don't see many orphans wandering the streets much here in America, but it does happen. Often law enforcement is involved in bringing orphans and runaways in and placing them in foster homes.

Spiritually, the same thing is happening. Someone comes along and sees a person wandering through life aimlessly. They invite them in to be part of their group or church. Maybe it is an invitation to an outreach event or a retreat. It could also be an invitation to come to their home for a meal. In any case, the spiritual orphan, the lost soul, is invited in to spend time with the family of God. The wanderer becomes like a foster child in the family of God.

Spiritual Foster Children

When an orphan becomes a foster child in a foster home there are many advantages. They are now safe. They now have a real bed and do not have to scrounge for food. They start to see there is more to life than just each day's needs for survival.

They are not part of the family, but they receive some of the benefits. They receive some protection and provision. They receive lots of love and understanding, but there is nothing permanent about it.

Spiritually, when we enter a church group and start to spend time with God's people, the same thing is happening. You are like a spiritual foster child. That group or church is going to give you some protection. They are going to love you and help you see beyond your daily survival. They are going to give you a safe place to rest and let your guard down a bit. Though there is nothing permanent and there is no inheritance or guarantee of staying, you enjoy the rest and provision.

Sometimes when a child is in a foster home and there is no hope to return to their family, or there is no family to return to, their hope is in someone adopting them. Often it is the foster families themselves that adopt these children.

Spiritually, that happens too. We need to be looking at getting each person who is a spiritual foster child in the family of God adopted into the family somewhere. It may not be with your group or church.



Maybe, it is back with the group or church they grew up in, or maybe it's the group or church down the street. At any rate, it is important for them to say yes to Jesus' call and become children of God.

Spiritual Adoption

John 1:12 says it. Those who receive Jesus and believe in his name have the right to become children of God.

As a child of God, you have a right to take on the name of the family. You are the son or daughter of the King! You are princes and princesses in the kingdom of God! And just like in a natural family, you have brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and lots of cousins, all of whom will stand alongside you because you are part of the family.

The changes that take place in you when you become a member of the family of God are great, too! Ephesians 2:19-22 says:

Ephesians 2:19-22

(19) Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (21) In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. (22) And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We are being built together into one Church with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. We are members of God's household and have the Creator of the universe as our father. We have His Son, our Savior, as a brother. It does not get any better than that.

Families have their issues. We have arguments and disagree on things. I remember when our children were younger, every now and then I would hear our children in the other room arguing about something and I would have to go in and be a dad and solve it for them.

God's family is no different. There are arguments sometimes. There are disagreements and hurts sometimes. But we must know and believe that God will step in when needed and solve the issue when we cannot solve it ourselves.

Conclusion

We want to welcome you into the family of God. We want to encourage you to be part of a group of believers who love Jesus and serve God with their whole hearts. We also encourage you to invite others into your group and help them become members of the family and we encourage you to live up to the family name, which is "Christian", and represent the family well.

Always be ready to invite in another stranger who is wandering and needs the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus. We are one big family. There are lots and lots of cousins, aunts and uncles, and brothers and sisters.

If you are ready to be adopted into the family of God, I want to invite you to say yes to Jesus right now. Jesus is calling you, and you hear his still small voice in your heart. It is as simple as saying, "Yes, Jesus. I am yours. I ask for your forgiveness and I give my life to you."



When you sincerely say that to Jesus, you are adopted into the family of God! But do not keep wandering after that. It is important that you become a part of a group of believers who you can stand with and who will stand with you.

And, please let us know. We want to celebrate with you! Click the *I said Yes* to Jesus link at the top of our web page or in the description of the video. Welcome to the family of God!

