

“A Better *Church* Family

Intro

- **Wrapping up ‘Better Families’ series**
- **This week focus on ‘Better *Church* Family’**
 - ‘Church Family’: As spend time with people through church, deep relationships form; some relationships deeper than biological relationship
 - 5th ‘church family for us’ - one thing that has been true in every church - there are some extraordinary people, and come to not be able to imagine life without them
 - While many positives regarding ‘church family’, there are also some challenges that come from the notion of ‘church’ as ‘family’
 - Treat each other as family in the not-so-positive ways, as well - ‘hurt those that are closest to us’; sometimes we treat others in the church as bad as we treat family, and worse; and this is viewed as ‘hypocrisy’ from those outside the church, and people say, ‘they can’t even get along, why would I want to be part of that??’
 - We are in a POST-CHRISTIAN culture - it’s not that people haven’t heard of Jesus, they just have been turned off by the Church and the junk that goes on...
 - I remember first time I saw the not-so-loving side of the Church - I wanted to leave...
 - Church is about Jesus, not the pastor, not the people already there
 - flawed as the Church is, it’s God’s PLAN A, and we need each other if we are going to be able to love God and others well...
 - **Worship Note:** The Church is **flawed**, and **broken**, and far from **perfect**, but it is God’s chosen **instrument**.

- It's the instrument that God has chosen to reach a world in need of
- And yes, people get hurt. If you've been hurt by the church, we want to offer an apology on behalf of the Church...if I've ever hurt you, I apologize - not intentional...
- Within 'church families' there can begin to be a feeling of 'inward focus' due to closeness (often unintentional) and there can be a perception that 'we're church family, you're not' - a need to always have a diligent, intentional eye towards radical hospitality, welcome and inclusion
 - Church is people holding hands together in a circle, but facing out to welcome others in
- And honestly, 'Church family' can also become an idol, where we begin to worship 'the family' more than we worship God; and 'focus on family' impacts 'faithfulness' because we become more focused on 'preserving the family' than we are in radical loyalty to God and radically serving God - this can happen, again, unintentionally, but it happens none the less, and it's something we need to guard against

As we talk about Church as family, we see in the Gospels that Jesus re-wrote the playbook on what it means to be family...

- Bible Notes: Jesus Challenges the conventional ties to birth and biological descent, the basic means through which the elite perpetrated its wealth and power
- Membership in the people of God not determined by ancestral ties
- Matthew 12:46-50

- 46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."
- 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."
- Luke 8: those true kindred to Jesus are those who "hear the Word of God and do it"
- Matthew 4:18 - disciples leave their families/fathers/careers/expectations and follow Jesus

Worship Note: A 'church family' of Jesus is a group of people with the shared **commitment** and **desire** to do the **will** of God the Father in Heaven, above everything else

IF you do the will of God the Father in Heaven...that's what binds us and makes us a church family - the shared commitment and desire to do the will of God the Father in Heaven

- **Romans 12 - great guidance on what being a 'church family' should look like and how we should treat each other**

Romans 12:9-16

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love.

Love plays a big part; Faith, hope and love, most important is love; love has to be at the forefront of our relationships - devoted in love in easy ways and in the tough ways

Honor one another above yourselves.

Out do one another in showing honor - happy for others, celebrate each other's victories

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Sometimes as the church we lose focus of what we are to be about; we get bogged down in programs - it's not about programs, it's about Jesus; keep the main thing the main thing

12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

God has preferred future for us; Gonna have problems - but GOd works all things for our good; faithful in prayer - deepened prayer life for Brent, drawing us into prayer - where the work is done; prophecy: "The work is gonna be done in our prayer closets"

Rees Howell - would spend HOURS in prayer - how much effort are we giving to prayer

13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Promised a lot of things in the Bible by Jesus - He promised His church that it would be persecuted...no popular, but He said that those who hated Him will hate us...need to recognize that when persecution comes that we strive to bless others, even those who persecute us...

[Most significant?]: **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[c] Do not be conceited.

- Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn - church is to come alongside one another and 'prop one another up' in the good times and bad times; be there for each other in good and bad
- Doing life together; on this adventure together...be willing to stick together
- Not perfect

Worship Note: Bottom-line, people in the church are to be **Jesus-like** to each other.

Closing