

# THE CHURCH: A FAMILY

## More than a Metaphor

### Sermon Outline Notes

All scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV)

**A Metaphor:** *The application of a name or descriptive term to an object or action to which it is imaginatively, but not literally applicable.* (Oxford Dictionary)

In the New Testament there are a number of metaphors describing the Church, e.g. a Body, a Temple, a Building a Family and a Bride.

### FAMILY: MORE THAN A METAPHOR

The concept of family is inherent in the way God has chosen to reveal himself to us. God is love, expressed in family relationship (Trinity)

God did not need a family, but he desired one, and wanted you and me to be part of it.

God sent his Son to rescue us. *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* Matt. 3:17. He is the model son in God's family and we become sons (and daughters) by adoption through faith in Him.

*He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—Ephesians 1:5*

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12-13.*

*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. Romans 8:29*

The Holy Spirit confirms our sonship.

*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4:6-7 (Romans 8:15-17)*

Jesus makes us fit for God's family and acknowledges that He is our brother. *Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Hebrews 2:10-11 (Matthew 12:49-50)*

Natural families are a wonderful gift, but they are temporary. God's family will last for ever.

**The Church:** God's family now. *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Gal 6:10*

*.....and eternally For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. Ephesians 3:14-15*

"We were formed for God's family" Rick Warren

God did not intend that any of His family members should be isolated or independent. Whilst our relationship to Christ is personal, God never intends it to be private.

Although we are members of the universal church of Jesus, most of the references to Church in the NT relate to the local church.

## WE CANNOT BECOME THE PEOPLE GOD INTENDED ON OUR OWN

God's purpose is that we should grow in maturity, becoming more and more like Christ. This takes place best in the family environment God has provided. Maturity has to do with relationships.

### We cannot come to maturity in isolation.

We need the support, encouragement, discipline, accountability and the testing that family fellowship provides.

No matter how we try to justify it, if we withdraw from, or become careless about fellowship, it is usually a symptom of spiritual decline and we deceive ourselves.

The church is God's primary means of our sanctification.

**It's where we belong**..... *you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, Ephesians 2:19. (Acts 2:42 -47)*

The word together characterises the NT descriptions of the church.

Examples are: *joined together, built together, heirs together, fitted together, held together and we will be caught up together.*

### Committed to a church family identifies us as a genuine believers

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:34-35*

### Sacrificial love is the key.

This kind of love cannot be learned in isolation. We have to be around irritating, imperfect, frustrating people. Jesus is our example

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 1 John 3:16*

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Eph. 4:2*

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Phil.2:3-4*

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:12-14*

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

## QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the privileges and benefits of being in God's family?
2. How would you describe a mature Christian in terms of church family relationships?
3. What do you find most challenging in terms of the quality of relationships God looks for? (see scriptures above)
4. What would loving sacrificially mean to you?
5. Do you see the church as a place where you mainly look to have your needs met, or where you can serve others in love?