

God's Family

Those of you who know me even slightly know how important family is to me. If I have the opportunity to spend time with any (or all) of my family, I will. This past holiday period was great—spending as much time with my family as I was able to. And I'm sure most people feel the same way about their families. The question, though, is "if we understand that concept of family, why is our view of God's family so different?"

This past Sunday, the lesson from the pulpit was a simple one, though it seems hard to understand and even harder to put into action. It involved God's family and our inclusion in it and our response to being in it. As baptized believers, we enter into a sacred family, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as brothers and sisters in Christ, we form a unit that is far more important than any other thing we may be a part of, even our physical family. I know that seems difficult to comprehend, but it is true.

Jesus stressed the importance of following Him in many verses of scripture, some even sounding harsh to us. His coming to this Earth would pit members of the same household at odds, some believing in him and others not. He said in **Matthew 10:37**:

"Anyone who loves his father and mother more than me is not worth of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

He said in **Luke 14:26**:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."

Nothing, no relationship one has, is more important than our relationship with Jesus and his family—the church. We have been born again into a new family and we are all children of God and a brother or sister to His Son, Jesus Christ. And we are His children regardless of color, nationality, or social or economic status. **(Galatians 3:26-29)**

Our relationship in this new family makes us unique. We are to stand out in a world full of lost souls. **(Philippians 2:15)** Our inclusion is a privilege that is not to be taken for granted. **(I John 3:1-3)** As members of God's family, our willingness to work for God changes and intensifies. Our eagerness to fellowship and share with one another grows because of the sense of family love and concern we now feel. We do "family" things: we feel what other members of the family feel **(Romans 12:15)**, we share with those in need and practice hospitality **(Romans 12:13)**, we talk to each other about our shortcomings and pray for each other **(James 5:16)**, and we bear one another's burdens **(Galatians 6:2)**. To put it simply, we in God's family really, genuinely, LOVE one another. **(I John 2:7-11)**

In this coming year, let us learn the joy of being a member of the family of God. Take every opportunity to gather with your family, both to contribute (mainly time and talent) and to benefit. Your presence will encourage us, and you will be greatly encouraged.

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