



Part 5 – FAMILY



“The church we see is a FAMILY: we started as a family + will continue to be a family. Our program will include large, weekly, communal meetings, but also small gatherings in people’s homes, where authentic friendship, honesty, trust, mutual support + accountability are cultivated.”

PREMISE #1: God made us for RELATIONSHIP

* We THRIVE ON, LIVE FOR, OPERATE BEST in relationship.

→ *How important is friendship to you? Do you have ‘close’ friends? Do you make friends easily? Do you ‘thrive on / operate best’ in relationship?*

PREMISE #2: The most fundamental human need is to GIVE and RECEIVE LOVE

* If that FLOW is HEALTHY, we’ll be EMOTIONALLY healthy.

* If it becomes HINDERED, BLOCKED, DAMAGED, then we start to struggle.

* A healthy emotional life comes from consistent INPUT of LOVE and unhindered, generous OUTPUT.

→ *What constitutes receiving love? What constitutes giving love? Is there a healthy flow in your life? Any damage that restricting the flow?*

PREMISE #3: God sets us in a FAMILY called CHURCH

* Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:19-20, Psalm 68:4-6.

* God ADOPTS us, becomes FATHER to the FATHERLESS, gives us IDENTITY, REFUGE, HOME, and gives us ONE ANOTHER.

* John 13:34, Romans 12:16, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 5:9, 1 Peter 4:9

* So much of that is WOVEN into the FABRIC of what church has always STOOD FOR, DONE & EMPHASISED.

→ *Look up that list of ‘one another’ scriptures. Do you see that woven into the fabric of what church looks like for you? Any others you’d add to that list?*

QUICK DISCLAIMER: Family is not the ONLY METAPHOR

... because, like all metaphors, it is LIMITED.

4 CAUTIONS:

a) Sometimes, if we think of church as family, we start thinking TOO SMALL.

b) Sometimes, ... we start becoming EXCLUSIVE.

c) Sometimes, ... we think it’s OKAY TO FIGHT.

d) Can over-use of the term ‘family’ become OFF-PUTTING to SINGLES?

→ *How do each of those cautions become dangers? Have you ever seen that in practice? What are the traps into which we might fall?*

→ *Was your family life dysfunctional? Has that affected the way you deal / interact with church, be it adversely or positively?*

So, Jesus also compares church to a BODY, GATHERING, ARMY, BRIDE, TEMPLE, VINE & FLOCK.

WHAT DO WE NEED FROM FAMILY?

(How does metaphor work positively? In what ways should church mirror family?)

1. Build a CULTURE that reinforces the POSITIVE ELEMENTS of what it means to be a family.

a) WELCOME → We all long to be INCLUDED, RESPECTED, COMFORTABLE ... We want everyone who walks through our doors to feel as if they’ve ‘COME HOME.’

b) LOVE → The ONLY place they’ll TRULY find it is IN CHRIST ... The FIRST place they SHOULD find it is HERE WITH US.

c) GRACE → Let this place be a HAVEN of GRACE,

→ *What does it really mean to be a welcoming church? Are we? Where are we doing well? Are there any people who might slip through the net?*

→ *Do you consider yourself part of the ‘welcome team?’ What does that look like?*

→ *If church is the first place people should find real love, how does that play itself out? What characteristics should they see, recognise and be drawn to?*

→ *What does it mean to be a ‘haven of grace?’ Why do people out there so need grace? How do / might / should we show it?*

→ *“Grace where it isn’t deserved, isn’t expected, even where it’s rejected.” Is that what Jesus did? Is that what church has looked like historically? Is that what people outside think of church? How might we change the perception and/or reality?*

2. Create environments where STRONG RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS can be made

a) CONNECT GROUP = Strong units of properly-CONNECTED, deeply-CARING, life-SHARING, DISCIPLE-making FRIENDS.

b) MINISTRY TEAMS → In family life, we DIVE IN, GET INVOLVED, SHARE ... Don’t HIDE ‘on the EDGE.’

→ *What are the opportunities and/or limitations of connect group relationships? Anything you’d like your group to grown in? How practically might you do that?*

→ *What teams are you involved in? What do you get out of being in that team? Any others that you might be ideally suited for? (see next week!)*

CLOSING THOUGHTS: What did Jesus do? ... His ‘numbers’

* He was close with 3

* Hung out with 12

* Had a wider circle of 72

* At Pentecost there were 500 (Sometimes He ministered to more than 5000)

→ *Do you have a ‘3?’ Who’s in your 12? What about your 72? How do the relative relationships differ?*

→ *Do you have spiritual parents, kids, siblings, cousins, grandparents, etc.?*