

ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES
TOOLS FOR LIFE
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THE FAMILY OF GOD

Sin broke apart the family of God. The plan of redemption was established to restore this family. Paul addresses those who have responded to God's call in their lives in the following way:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

The Greek word translated “household” is *oikeios*. When we become a believer in Jesus Christ we become a member of God's household. We become a member of His family.

Traditionally, we tend to think of church in a larger sense, the corporate or congregational aspect. We do not tend to think of church in terms of a smaller family. However, the early church from the biblical and historical perspective was made up of small home fellowships. These fellowship groups functioned as family.

When Paul describes his own feelings toward the Thessalonian family of God, he expresses the relationship that is to be experienced in the family of God:

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8, NIV). [with adaptation]

These kinds of endearing relationships cannot happen in the larger congregational setting. If our church activities consist primarily of coming to church on Sabbath morning, greeting our friends, and then returning home, we cannot possibly achieve this level of family relationship.

For example, what if you heard about a family that remained separated from one another during the week and then came together once a week of an hour or two, briefly greeted one another, then sat in rows, and heard someone give a lecture. Afterward, they went their separate ways

until seven days later when they associated “together” by again greeting one another, sitting in rows, and listening to another lecture. What would you think about that family’s togetherness? I think you would question if there were really a family. Most would certainly conclude that their style of family togetherness had much room for improvement. Amazingly and yet sadly, most Christians seek to be a church family using this pattern of family.

In a healthy family the members know each other intimately. They know one another’s fears, hopes, dreams, frustrations, and struggles. In a loving, caring family the members are there to encourage one another with words and actions.

The family of God is to function in the same way. However, God’s family has one significant advantage over the average family in the world. God’s family experiences the fruit and gifts of the Spirit functioning in their midst. God Himself is the One ministering to the family members. He does this through each member of the family as they continue to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The intimate relationship with God this daily baptism brings allows Christ to live in and minister through each believer, but this dynamic of family can only take place in the smaller fellowship group setting.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

What kind of relationship did God originally plan for His children?

What did sin do to God's plan?

What does the plan of redemption do for God's broken family?

What kind of relationship does God intend His church members to have with one another?

What setting is most conducive for this to happen?

Would you like to experience God's ideal for His church family?

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