

Understanding Church as the Family of God

- I. Importance of Metaphors → Family
 - A. Family is an informative term → what concepts are embedded w/ family?
 - 1. Love, sharing, care, diversity (size, shape, age, personality), forgiveness, commitment, lifelong, generations, family tree
 - B. Did you know that in the gospels there is much talk about disciples and making disciples, but in Acts we see a transition, and we see it fully in Paul's letters
 - 1. No longer primarily talking about people as disciples, but as family members
 - C. It makes sense, then, when we read Acts 2:42-47
 - 1. This isn't how communists act. This isn't how a new religion acts. This isn't how a political system acts. This is how a family acts!
 - D. God's people are, in essence, a family
 - E. Examples of this metaphor in Scripture:
 - 1. "I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18).
 - 2. "Stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'" (Matt. 12:49-50).
 - 3. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).
 - 4. "As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the family of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
 - 5. "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1).
 - F. Is this just rhetoric? Are we really God's family or is this just how the Bible explains how we should act?
- II. Overview
 - A. God wants a family
 - 1. Doesn't need it - wants it
 - 2. "Sons of God"
 - 3. Luke's genealogy → Adam = son of God
 - 4. God's plan is to have this diverse family with him in Eden
 - a) Eden is a unique place b/c it is an overlap of things of earth and things of heaven (the spiritual world) as a temple garden
 - B. His family rebels
 - 1. Spiritual kids → Rebellion #1
 - 2. Earthly kids → Rebel #1a
 - a) Adam and Eve - first parents

- b) God kicks them out of his house, his temple paradise
 - c) A promise! One of their descendants...
- C. Starts a division of *family lines* in the Bible → Sons of Seth vs. Cain
 - 1. Leads to another rebellion #2 (which is really weird) in Gen 6:1-4
 - 2. Sons of God try to make their own offspring, to corrupt God's family, destroy the line and ruin the promised rescuer
 - a) Go into the daughters of man and create these giants of old
 - b) Makes them rivals to God (in their mind)
 - (1) Rather than rejoicing about's plan for a diverse family of his earthly family and spiritual family living together, they want to lord over humans (like Cinderella's stepsisters)
 - (2) But God wanted a family, not slaves to do his bidding
 - 3. 2 Peter 2:4 & Jude 6 say they broke the boundary so God punished them
 - a) The result? Genesis 6:5-6
 - 4. The 1st rebellion led to humanity losing everlasting life w/ God
 - 5. This 2nd supernatural rebellion took the effects of sin to another level, accelerating human depravity and self-destruction
 - 6. God's best course of action? Wipe out humanity and start over w/ Noah
 - a) Notice, it doesn't say God was angry, but grieved. This wasn't an emotional response
 - b) Noah's story → 120 years of building and preaching repentance, but to no avail
 - (1) Once again God's kids turned their back on him
 - c) Post flood, God repeats the command given to Adam and Eve - make babies! (Genesis 9:1) → rebuild the family
- D. Rebellion #3, Tower of Babel
 - 1. Noah's descendants were supposed to spread out over the earth, spreading God's reign as a family of image bearers, but instead they built up rather than out, trying to further their own glory
 - a) God scattered them, but he also estranges himself from the bulk of humanity, giving tribes over to the Sons of God and choosing Israel as his immediate family (Deut 32:8-9)
 - b) Essentially God said, "If you don't want me to be your God - they can be your gods."
 - c) The gods did a lousy job, by the way, in Psalm 82 we see that God judges them and says he will take away their immortality and also take the nations back under his care
 - (1) In other words, God has a plan to restore all of humanity back to himself → to make one diverse family
- E. So God appears to a man named Abraham and tells him that through him he is going to build a huge family
 - 1. Just one problem - Abraham doesn't have any kids! AND his name means "Father of Many" (what an insult)

2. How could this happen? How could God build a nation, His nation, through a childless man? With man this is impossible, but not with God!
 3. His son would be the beginning of a new family for God on earth
 4. Abraham didn't earn this, God simply chose him, and Abraham believed.
 5. God's covenant with Abraham was based on belief in God's promises, faith.
 - a) Abraham believed, not behaved, and God credited it to him
 - b) Abraham believed before he obeyed
 - c) His belief shaped the way he lived → this is the essence of discipleship, faith in a loving God which leads to our loyalty
 6. Abraham did indeed have a son with his wife, but not before - once again - there was risk of the line being corrupted (child of flesh vs promise).
 - a) The child of promise, faith over self-reliance, would be the start of God's new family, new people (Israel) and they would be a blessing to other nations (hmm, remember what happened to those *nations* at the tower of babel!)
 - b) The child of flesh would be a violent man who would fight against all his family and descendants → love vs. discord
 - c) Jesus would descend from Abraham and it would be Jesus who would bring all the nations of the world back to God!
- F. So how would God's family turn out?
1. Wound up in slavery, but w/ a promise of rescue
 2. God indeed did rescue his family through a man named Moses
 3. After Moses brought the people back to the place where God had commissioned him, he gave them a law - some family rules
 - a) The law wasn't about earning a place in God's family. They already were God's family. God gave them laws to show they wanted to be in God's family. "What our family does"
 4. If they were loyal to their "Father" they would be good representatives of their family to the rest of the nations (think honor and shame culture)
 - a) It was supposed to start with Israel, but the family was supposed to expand into "enemy territory" or other nations
 5. God's laws were ultimately about helping his children live happy, peaceful lives with one another and avoid other gods (the "dads" who ruled the other nations). It wasn't about improving them, but empowering them
 6. God's family refused to be loyal to him even though he had unfailing loyalty to them.
 - a) Rather than making a clear break from evil and speaking truth into it, they coexisted with evil, and adopted its ways
 - b) Rather than telling the nations about their God, they adopted the false gods as their gods.
 7. All of this resulted in exile → God's family being scattered and dispersed across the ancient world (think Garden... Flood... Babel... rinse, repeat)

8. If we were God, we would give up by now, but God refused to abandon his family. Instead, God brought forth a solution
 - a) A New Covenant would be made where his children didn't rebel against him, but loved him instead
 - b) But how would God uphold all the old covenants of law and death and punishment? God would have to send a rescuer - one who would have to fulfill all the previous promises and requirements
- G. What did God do? He physically joined his human family
1. Jesus was born as Emmanuel, God with us. He would be born, live a perfect life (fulfilling the law's requirements for him), die on a cross (fulfilling the law's requirements for us) and raise from the dead (defeating death once and for all and starting a new family)
 - a) Rebirth (John 3:16) would be our entrance into this spiritual family
 2. Jesus' humanity is crucial in this because the hope that God could reconcile human beings w/ the spiritual world is embodied in the man who was 100% man and 100% God.
 - a) Because God became a man, he could die and death was important so that it could be defeated by resurrection
 - b) Since Jesus was also God, he could bring himself back to life
 - (1) This death and resurrection was always the plan
 - c) Because of his life and death, the covenant is fulfilled
 - d) Because of the resurrection, the effects of Adam and Eve's rebellion (death) is overcome
 3. In order for God to clean up the problems w/ having a human family and have them live in his presence, he had to become a man and fulfill the covenants himself
 - a) So God sent Jesus to fix the problem of death and sin, to fulfill his covenant requirements, so he could make YOU a member of his family forever. How? By trusting in his finished work.
 4. The Gospel is good news b/c it isn't about your behavior, but Christ's
- H. Where does this all end up?
1. *Hebrews 2:10–12, [10] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. [11] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, [12] saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."*
 - a) In other words, Jesus will present us as his brothers and sisters, without shame, in the present of the congregation of the spiritual beings (the sons of God).
 - b) Whereas Satan and his minions wanted nothing to do with humans in God's sacred space, viewing us as lower and lesser,

- unfit, they will be banished and die an eternal death why we - those previously subjected to death - will live an eternal life
- c) In a beautiful, diverse, global, earthly AND heavenly family.

2. This is God's forever family!

III. So what do we do about it?

A. What defines a healthy family? Love → it is intertwined w/ our ID

1. Love the Lord w/ all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

2. This is God's intended design for all image-bearers (far cry from reality!)

B. What do families do? They keep growing.

1. Fathers become grandfathers. Kids become moms and dads. Fathers teach their sons how to be men, and so on and so forth.

2. The family is a metaphor for spiritual discipleship and making disciples

C. Be fruitful and multiply as a biblical motif

1. Adam... Noah... Abraham... TOLEDOTs... Davidic dynasty... genealogies...

2. Now to us - Go and make disciples = expand the family!

a) How? As the word goes forth, it lands on fertile hearts and the Spirit brings that to fruition in the form of spiritual birth

b) Guys, even procreation is a metaphor for disciples making disciples!

(1) The word = the seed

(2) The heart = the fertile egg

(3) New birth is the result

IV. Discussion

A. What was confusing? What was your big takeaway?

B. Think about how family should love one another. Do you love your spiritual family like this? Remember 1 Cor 13 is a great place to see what love looks like!

C. Healthy things grow, healthy things multiply. This is true in nature and in families.

Do you know how to share your story in a simple way? Do you know how to share God's story? Maybe someone at your table can help. If not, raise your hand and one of us will come over and show you!