

MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP: FAMILY



Ephesians 4 & 1 Corinthians 12

KEY TRUTHS

- **Biological family is only part of what family looks like for a Christian.** Your parents and siblings are important, but the Bible tells us that the Church is a much greater expression of family.
- **We are one family.** All Christians have been joined into one family in Jesus, through baptism. This is the family of believers we call the Church.
- **The Bible gives us the blueprint** for building the healthiest possible family relationships.
- **Every member of the family is essential**, regardless of their role, background or what the world says about them.
- **In the Church, like a biological family, we don't choose our sisters and brothers**, we love everyone as family regardless of our other preferences.

CULTURAL FALSEHOODS

- Family is a couple with 2.4 children.
- Family is optional - if you don't like yours, you can opt-out.
- Friends are like the family you choose – family 2.0.
- Family is for kids and parents – but if you're in between you can do your own thing.

START THE CONVERSATION

- What is it that you think of when you first hear the word **'family'**?
- Predominantly biological, church family, or something completely different?
- Do you have predominantly positive or negative experiences of either biological or church family? Or does it just make you feel a bit meh?
- What is the oddest memory you have of 'family' (however you want to define that)?
- If you had to live without your family (again, whatever that looks like for you), what would you miss the most?

GOING DEEPER

Pray together to begin. Ask God to be present with you as you gather as an expression of family in your group. Pray that he'd be honoured in your conversations and that he'd speak to you all as you explore the passage and the topic today.

Most of us will have some baggage about the topic '**family**'. Take a moment to give everyone a chance to share how they feel about '**family**'.

We should expect the Bible and Christian teaching to confound our assumptions and human beliefs about the world. As Ben told us, the ultimate vision of family in the Bible is **the Church**.

- How do our experiences or biological family compare to our experiences of church family?
- Do our experiences of one affect how we feel about the other? Explore the answer a little together.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 together.

Does any one thing stand out for you immediately after reading this passage? Share these thoughts together in your groups.

Ben's first point was that as baptised believers, as Christians, we are **one family** (v12-13). In the Church in Corinth (to whom 1 Corinthians is written) there are divisions appearing because some felt more important than others.

- How are we doing at being one family, without division? Better than the Corinthians?
- How can we model that better as a church family?

The second point was that **we all belong** (v15-19). Some of the imagery in the passage seems ridiculous, but take a moment to chat together about:

- How we claim not to belong
- How others might exclude us, deliberately or not

Because we share in the same baptism, because of what Jesus has won for us on the cross, because we are Jesus' family, brothers and sisters, we can all claim what was spoken over Jesus at his baptism, "**You are my child, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.**" (Mat 3:17)

- It can be hard to own this level of self-worth and accept God's acceptance. How do you do this well, or where do you struggle with this?

Often when a biological family loses a member, there is great sadness and mourning, regardless of how likeable that person was. Family is family because of every part of it. Your family needs you. **The Church needs you.** That's the third point (v21-22).

- Play a game of worst-case-scenario. If the church were made up only of copies of you, what's the worst that could happen?
- Is there anyone who you find particularly trying? In a safe and honouring way, preserving anonymity where necessary, chat through how difficult characteristics can bless us.

If the Church needs you – are you present and available to the Church?

- Where do I need to commit more to this family?
- Where do I need to give more?

- Where do I need to celebrate more?
- Where do I need to grieve more?

How do we measure up to the 1954 Archbishops' 'A Short Guide to the Duties of Church Membership':

ALL baptized and confirmed members of the Church must play their full part in its life and witness. That you may fulfil this duty, we call upon you:

- ***To follow the example of Christ in home and daily life, and to bear personal witness to Him.***
- ***To be regular in private prayer day by day.***
- ***To read the Bible carefully.***
- ***To come to Church every Sunday.***
- ***To receive the Holy Communion faithfully and regularly.***
- ***To give personal service to Church, neighbours, and community.***
- ***To give money for the work of parish and diocese and for the work of the Church at home and overseas.***
- ***To uphold the standard of marriage entrusted by Christ to His Church.***
- ***To care that children are brought up to love and serve the Lord.***

At St Thomas' we **follow Jesus, build community, and love Newcastle**. At the heart of that is the fact we're made for relationships. What's one of your takeaways from the Made For Relationship series?

FURTHER READING

[I Believe in the Church | David Watson](#)
[Your Church Is Your Family | Megan Hill \(Article\)](#)