

Kingdom Family
Pastor Joe Oakley - April 27, 2025

Today we are continuing our sermon series called Seize the Kingdom of God. We are now going to preach a mini-series within the series called Kingdom Family. We will teach on a biblical perspective of marriage and family, but first I felt led to preach on how the church is a family.

Most of us have an extremely limited view of church as a family. But Jesus didn't. Matthew 12:46-50 says:

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Someone said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak with You."

Jesus replied to Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" Pointing to 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."

On the surface it seems like Jesus was ignoring His family here. It seems disrespectful to His mother and brothers. But Jesus would never dishonor His mother and family. He made an important point here, but there is no reason to believe that He did not speak with His family after that.

The point He made was that His followers are also His family. They are not His physical family, but His spiritual family. In this statement, **Jesus did not diminish his biological family. Instead, He elevated the stature of His spiritual family.**

God is our Heavenly Father and Jesus considers us to be His brothers and sisters. Hebrews 2:11-12 says:

Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters. For He said to God, "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers and sisters. I will praise You among Your assembled people."

If Jesus sees us as brothers and sisters, then we need to see ourselves as brothers and sisters.

Many people's idea of church is quite different than the New Testament church's idea. Many people's strategy for spiritual growth is very different than the NT church way of spiritual growth.

For most American believers - church exists for them.

They attend when and where it's convenient for them.
 They come to church expecting to receive but not to give.
 They expect to be served but not serve.
 They feel no responsibility for anyone else, just for themselves.

That is the exact opposite of the New Testament Church! **In New Testament times, the group was more important than the individual. People made decisions based on what's best for the group, not just what's been for themselves. The group came first, not the individual.**

When people don't see the church as family, they don't see the need to commit to a church. They go from church to church but they never put down roots in a church. They don't realize that **growth requires commitment to a local church.** Psalm 92:13 says:

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Being planted means I join a local church and I put down roots. I get involved, I give, I commit. If you struggle with this - you need a revelation of the church as family.

The Bible reveals that God is a Father who desires a family. From the beginning God has declared His purpose to man. In Genesis 1:26 God said:

Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...

Our heavenly Father had a plan for us from the beginning. God's purpose has always been to have children in His own image. Romans 8:29 says:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God's eternal purpose is to have a vast family of children conformed to the image of Christ, who will bring Him glory and honor in all things. To accomplish that John 1:12 says:

To all who received Jesus, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

It's interesting that the Old Testament rarely refers to God as Father. However, when Jesus came on the scene He introduced God as Father. He referred to God as Father more than 170 times.

But, not everyone is part of God's family – only those who have been born again. There is a big lie that people buy into that we are all God's children. This is not what the Bible teaches!

In John 8 Jesus had a conversation with some people who did not believe He was the son of God. He told them in verses 42-44

If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on My own; but He sent Me. Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.

Everyone is part of one of two families: God's or Satan's. All it requires to be part of Satan's family is to be born. But to be a part of God's family you must be born again! You must change kingdoms, change families, change fathers! In Matthew 13 Jesus talked about good seed and bad seed. Verses 38-39 say:

...the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

You became part of the human family by your first birth, but you become a member of God's family by your second birth. 1 Peter 1:3 says:

It is His boundless mercy that has given us the privilege of being born again so that we are now members of God's own family.

The invitation to be part of God's family is universal, but there is one condition: profession of faith in Jesus. Galatians 3:26 says:

For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become his children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our spiritual family.

<p>The church is described many ways in the New Testament. We are all members, but we're part of a body. We are all soldiers, but we're in an army. We are all sheep, but we're in a flock. We are children of God AND we are part of God's family. First and foremost, the church is a family.</p>
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Ephesians 3:14-15 says:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

You know how we say - "Well, I'm going to go to church," as if church is just a place you go to. The church is not just a place you go to - the church is a family you belong to. There's a big difference.

God wants a family, and He created you to be a part of it. 1 John 3:1 says:

See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for He allows us to be called His children...

God designed the church to be a family of people who care for one another. We need to know that God did not create us to be alone. Psalm 68:5-6 says:

The God who is in His holy dwelling place is the father of the fatherless and the defender of widows. God places lonely people in families.

God created us for relationships – with Him and others. One of the ways He places the lonely in a family is by placing them in a church.

The church It is not a building; it is not a service; it is not an institution; it is not an organization; it is not a club. It is a family. **The Christian life is not just a matter of believing. It is a matter of belonging and as part of God's family, you have a place to belong.**

Belonging requires us to commit to attend church on a regular basis. It's so sad that many American Christians see church attendance as something that is optional. But the Bible commands us to NOT stop meeting together. Hebrews 10:25 says:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.

Everybody has valid reasons for missing occasionally. I understand being sick or going on vacation or having a real emergency. But those things should be the exception, not the rule. For many people, going to church is the exception rather than the rule. That's because they don't understand the principle of Kingdom Family. Relationships are the glue that holds the church together. They are also the key to growth – as individuals and as a church.

Ephesians 4:15-16 tells us to ***grow up in all things into Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.***

What do joints supply? Connection. Relationship. We will grow and flourish when we are committed to God's house and connected to God's people and when we each do our part.

It's sad that many American Christians see Christianity as an individual thing. They see their spiritual life as personal or private. That's not what the Bible teaches. Americans tend to believe that their own dreams, happiness and personal fulfillment take precedence over any groups well-being, whether it's family, church or any other group.

But the world in which Jesus and His followers lived had a strong group culture in which the health of the group—not the needs of the individual—received first priority. And the most important group for persons in the ancient world was the family.

That's why the New Testament writers chose the concept of family as the main metaphor to describe the church. In Bible times, a community of believers lived out life together. Acts 2:46 says:

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

Notice that they met in the temple and in homes. They had Sunday celebrations with everyone and then they met in small groups in homes. This is why small groups are so important to our church. Small groups are not an end in themselves. In small groups we meet people, we build relationships and we grow.

You see, relationships are rarely built by just attending Sunday services. You need to be in a small group where relationships are built and then you are built up because spiritual life is developed by your interaction with others. Galatians 6:10 says:

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 shows us how to do that.

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

We are commanded to treat others in the church like family because we are family. Caring for our church family is not just the pastors' job – it is a ministry for all of us. Elders and pastors can't do every single bit of caring that takes place in the church – but we have the responsibility to see that it happens. We are to be examples of caring for our church family and we are to equip others to care for our church family.

This is why we have a culture of care in our church family and it's why we equip care ministers to help care for our church family. All of us have a responsibility to care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25 says:

There should be no division in the body, so that all the members care for each other equally.

By the way - how do you show your love for God? By doing things like worshipping Him and obeying Him?

Yes, but here's a way that is often overlooked. Hebrews 6:10 says:

For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for other believers. We love, serve and give to God by loving, serving and giving to people.

Don't say you love and serve God if you don't love and serve people. 1 John 4:20-21 says:

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And He has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:10 says:

We can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

This does not say that those who hate other believers are not children of God. It says those who do not love other believers do not belong to God. So - you can have no hate toward other believers and still not love them. The opposite of love is not necessarily hate. Love involves caring, so the opposite of love is also to be uncaring.

And the Bible says don't say you love God if you don't care about your brothers and sisters in Christ. And if you don't love them, it shows how independent and self-reliant you are. You might think, "God is all I need." But 1 Corinthians 12:21 speaks of the body of Christ and says

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

God created us to need Him and one another in the church family. Our vertical growth in Christ cannot be dissociated from our horizontal growth with people. We all need the fathers and mothers of the church in our lives. Listen to 1 Corinthians 4:15-16.

Even though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

Many people want to teach, but few want to be fathers and mothers. Teaching is much easier than getting involved in people's lives and making disciples. Paul addressed this in 1 Thessalonians 2. In verse 7 he says -

We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

Then in verses 11 and 12 he says

You know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

These passages show us the female role of gently nurturing children and the male role of exhorting, comforting and charging children to be all the God wants them to be. Those are both reflections of our Father God who is gentle when we need gentleness and exhorting when we need motivation.

We all need the companionship of the brothers and sisters of the church family. And we all need the older generations of the church in our lives. Older men and women disciple the younger members of the family. But **a healthy church cannot be made up of people only wanting to receive and never give.**

Many believers are excusing themselves from making disciples because they don't believe they are ready yet. I know people in their 40's, 50's or older who still don't think they are ready to make disciples. And most of them have been in church for decades!

What I need you to understand is that one of the main ways you grow as a disciple is by helping other people grow! There are many people in churches who feel stagnant - they are not growing or changing. Usually, they blame the church, so they change churches. But eventually they feel stagnant at the new church and they stay in this continual cycle of changing churches not realizing that the problem is not the churches.

The problem is that they are like the Dead Sea rather than the Sea of Galilee. What do I mean by that? The Jordan River flows into the north side of the Sea of Galilee and then flows out the south side. Because that Sea has an inlet and an outlet it is teeming with life. The Jordan River then flows to the Dead Sea where it has no outlet. It stops there. Because there is no outlet, the water in the Dead Sea is stagnant and cannot sustain life.

What we learn from that is this: Water must flow to stay fresh! If all you do is take in without giving out – you will become a stagnant pool with no life. This explains why many believers are not growing and lack spiritual life. You see, it's possible to attend church, listen to sermons, and read the Bible - and still not have a growing spiritual life.

You probably don't need more input - You need more output!
 You probably don't need to take in more – you need to release more!
 You probably don't need to receive more – you need to give more!
 Freely you have received – freely give!
 God's given to you – so you give to others!

God's blessed you – so you bless others!
God's met your needs – so you meet the needs of others!
God's forgiven you – so you forgive others!
God loves you – so you love others!
God ministers to you – so you minister to others!

So, let the word of God flow into you and then let it flow out to others!
Let the Spirit of God flow into you and then let it flow out to others!

You can do this by getting involved in ministries to children, youth, men, and women. You can get involved in small groups and our care ministry. Go to our welcome center after the service to see how to get connected. Go to our app or website to search ways to serve.

We are a Kingdom Family and we need each other.
That means we need you!