

Friday: Family – a new twist

Read: John 13:34-35³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

<p>Reflect: Jesus couldn't have been more clear (at least I don't think He could've been). The world will know that we are striving to be like Him (be His disciples) when it sees us love one another.</p> <p>Yet the command to love one another wasn't anything new (cf. Lev19:18; Mk12:31). However, the manner in which this love would be shown (dying for another) certainly was new.</p> <p>Later Jesus would repeat this command (Jn15:12). Apparently He thought it was rather important. Yet while Jesus did in fact die for His friends, we must not miss how He served them in day to day tasks as well (e.g., Jn13:1-20). Sometimes a big "one time event" is easy...but the daily, mundane tasks are hard.</p>	<p>Respond: When was a time that someone who wasn't a believer witnessed you being "unloving" (either in action or word) toward a fellow believer? What was the result of that?</p> <p>Is there someone in the family of God with whom you need to make amends? What are you going to do about it?</p> <p>What is a recent way a brother or sister in God's family has served you?</p>
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Pray: Pray for your love for others at NLCC to grow. Pray for a productive and God-honoring meeting between the elders and preaching minister this coming Sunday. Pray for safe travel as groups will be heading home from CIY's "Move" today – pray the impact of the week will continue to influence their daily lives.

Saturday: Hear & Obey...

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4ff⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.⁷ You shall teach them diligently..."

<p>Reflect: We've spent a week looking at some texts dealing with the subject of family. Within a family is (typically) where love can be seen and experienced. This is good, and from the Bible's point of view, a natural thing.</p> <p>Since we are indeed family, and God is our Father, how do we relate to Him? Do we treat Him with reverence and respect? Do we attempt to sneak around "behind His back" against His will for us? How aware are we of how good He's been to us?</p> <p>A proper view of God as our Father is vital for a properly functioning family unit... A properly functioning family unit will impact those around them for God's glory... When God is glorified, people are saved... How important is a proper view of God?</p>	<p>Respond: Has your view of family changed any this past week?</p> <p>What can you do today to prepare yourself to worship God tomorrow at our building?</p> <p>Consider spending time in God's word before going to sleep tonight...and before you do anything else tomorrow morning.</p>
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Pray: Thank God for another week of life; pray this coming week you show His love to others more consistently. Pray for all our activities at the building tomorrow – pray God is glorified. Thank God for (at least) three specific instances where you noticed His grace on your behalf this past week.

A Loving Family...

July 13 – 19

What is a family? So many views, so many questions... Here's an unedited view I found on the internet:

- I grew up in the very typical "Leave It To Beaver" family. my dad worked and made an excellent salary. my mother did not have to work. she was a typical 50s housewife and mother. she stayed home and raised her children. sounds like this family came from a fairy tale story, huh?
- It happened and here is why:
- We had dinner at 5 pm every day. we talked about each other's events of the day. we actually listened to each other and sometimes pretended to be interested. we were not that good.
- Bottom line, we were together. being together somehow seats the bond of a family. each person going their separate way, will not form a family bond.
- My mother was home to make sure i stayed out of trouble. that i had someone at home to answer to. i did not run wild after school or on the weekends. i knew my mother was there and waiting for my brother and i.
- I believe family ties cannot be invented, they must be born into each one of us. as an example, my family continued the 5 pm family gathering dinner with our children. my children know the meaning of the family bond.
- My wife and i are now great grandparents. i am proud to say that this family tradition is being carried on by our children, to their children.
- Good family bonding is precious. many, many families do not know this experience. i am proud to say that this experience is alive and well in my family.

I suppose that sounds nice...to an extent. But what about those without the "Leave It To Beaver" type of upbringing? Is there any hope they'll be able to experience "family"?

There is some truth in the above point of view. Spending time with one another can in fact facilitate healthy relationships. Yet, the line about family ties not being able to be "invented" seems a bit of a stretch (as well as his Mom not working...but we'll give him the benefit of the doubt there...).

Fortunately the "Inventor" of the family structure has spoken on the area of family. It's not simply biological; although strong biological family ties are an immense blessing. Yet for those who aren't blessed with a "good" biological family, they can always find a place in the family of God (plus there's always hope for any biological family...).

While the family of God isn't merely "invented" – spending time together (with your brothers and sisters in Christ) certainly does strengthen those familial bonds. Interestingly, spending time with those currently not in God's family strengthens bonds as well. Bonds that hopefully will one day help to lead them into the strongest bond ever – the bond of being in God's family.

Monday: Family – the beginning

Read: Genesis 2:23-24 ²³ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

<p>Reflect: The first family on record; Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It’s clear to see that a family unit was always in God’s plan. Marriage isn’t an afterthought or something God thought up once children arrived.</p> <p>In fact, by reading Genesis 1 and 2 together, we see that God’s intention was always for a man and a woman to be committed to each other in marriage. In Genesis 1:27 it says God created “man” in His own image – both “male and female...”</p> <p>It sounds like the image of God is most fully seen and demonstrated through a properly functioning marital union. A man and a woman, working together to bring out the best in each other.</p>	<p>Respond: How can we be more loving towards anyone who might not have the biblical formula of a family (i.e., Dad, Mom, and children)? What needs might we be overlooking in our body...and our surrounding communities?</p> <p>If you’re married, how does your spouse bring out the best in you? Have you thanked him/her?</p> <p>If you’re single, enjoy it. Single people can serve God in ways married people can’t. Being single doesn’t mean being “incomplete” – God has gifted people for singleness (we need not pity them).</p>
<p>Pray: Thank God for our full day yesterday. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in the lives of those who received the groceries last night; as well as those who did the delivering. Pick a family of NLCC and pray for them; let them know you did so at some point (e.g., this coming Sunday, a phone call, an e-mail, a note).</p>	

Tuesday: Family – a new beginning

Read: Exodus 12:3-4 ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.

<p>Reflect: This text occurs as the Hebrew people are getting ready to leave the land of Egypt. Only Egypt doesn’t know it yet... This was the night of the Passover, when YHWH spared those who were obedient to Him.</p> <p>Here we see that the family unit is still important to God. A man’s obedience to God in this situation resulted in freedom for his entire family; disobedience resulted in death – which would affect the entire family.</p> <p>After the Exodus, and the unfortunate wandering in the wilderness, we again see God’s blessing being extended to an entire family in the story of Rahab (Josh2:8-21; 6:22-25). God desires to operate within family units.</p>	<p>Respond: The Passover was a major event for a Jewish family. What major events does your family celebrate? Why?</p> <p>Was the family in which you grew up a good example for being obedient to God? If so, thank Him for that. If not, pray your influence on your family will be better.</p> <p>Are you aware of your family’s heritage of faith?</p>
<p>Pray: Thank God for the money that was pledged to reduce the debt of NLCC this past Sunday. Continue to pray for Cassie, Cierra, Kerri, Kristina, and Tammy Krause as they are at CIY’s “Move” all this week. Pray for the Adult Discipleship Groups taking place tonight.</p>	

Wednesday: Family – another new beginning

Read: Acts 11:12-14 ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’

<p>Reflect: God is continuing to work within family units. In fact, by reading back in chapter 10, we see that more than simply the “immediate biological family” of Cornelius is implied in these verses (cf. 10:24).</p> <p>We shouldn’t take these verses to mean that just because Cornelius (and likely a few key adults) believed that automatically the rest of the household was saved. That goes against the biblical picture of an individual’s salvation.</p> <p>However, it is safe to infer that the assumption is Cornelius (and those key adults) will be faithful to God and therefore his (their) children will follow suit. It has been God’s plan from the beginning...and it continues to be His plan for the present day as well.</p>	<p>Respond: How many of your immediate family (parents and siblings) are in a relationship with Jesus? What about grandparents, cousins, etc.?</p> <p>Cornelius and his family were the first Gentile converts to Christianity. That was HUGE news. Do you know of a family that if they came to know Jesus it would also be HUGE news?</p> <p>How can you be influential in the faith development of your children, or grandchildren, or nieces and nephews?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for the family you thought of above to come to know Jesus. Thank God for the blessing it is to be a part of His family. Pray for unity and purity for the family of NLCC.</p>	

Thursday: Family – a new definition

Read: Mark 3:31-35 ³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” ³³ And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

<p>Reflect: It’s important to note what is not taking place in this text. Jesus is not totally dismissing His biological family; He’s using hyperbole (overstatement) to make a point...loyalty to God trumps everything else.</p> <p>By reading Mark 3:21 we see that Jesus’ family was concerned for Him. In essence, they didn’t believe His claims (they thought He was insane). It’s evident by reading Mark 3:22 that the religious leaders didn’t believe Jesus’ claims either.</p> <p>Jesus was running out of obvious places to turn to for support. Family – nope; the religious leaders – nope. Fortunately He was recreating the family of God (cf. Mk3:13-19). It was that family that would stick by Him, even if imperfectly at times.</p>	<p>Respond: Do you know of anyone whose biological family has rejected them due to their allegiance to Jesus? How can you support them?</p> <p>What is something you’d like to do for God, but if you did it, others might think you had lost your mind?</p> <p>It seems that a combination of Mark 1:15 and 12:29-31 are Mark’s definition of those who do “the will of God”. What are evidences you see of these at NLCC? What about your own life?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for those who will be preaching and teaching this coming Sunday; they are always appreciative of your prayers as they prepare. Pray that your biological family will follow God more closely, or come to follow Him for the first time. Pray again for the families who received food from the family of NLCC on Sunday.</p>	