



Faith Family Discipleship

The Family of God *Selected Passages*

Main Idea: The church is the family of God: Brothers and sisters in Christ, who are joined together as the household of God to grow together for the glory of God as his children!

The church is the family of God. This isn't just rhetoric; it's God's design that's confirmed by God's Word. In the New Testament Epistles, the authors of these letters used the term "brothers" (which can also be translated as brothers and sisters) almost 200 times, with the vast majority of these references used to address other believers. These writers also used the phrase "children of God" twelve times to identify believers, who are the church. Additionally, they used the term "heirs" in relation to the inheritance in the kingdom of God that believers are given by God's grace. The term "household of God" is used in a few key passages to identify the church. In all of these ways, God makes it clear that the church is the family of God: Brothers and sisters in Christ, who are joined together as the household of God to grow together for the glory of God as his children!

Jesus identified others as family based on their faith and obedience to the Father (Matthew 12:46-50).

The mother and brothers of Jesus were concerned about him. They had come to confront Jesus, but the crowds kept them from being able to get inside to see him (Luke 8:19). When Jesus heard that his family was outside, waiting to speak with him, he used the situation as a teaching opportunity for his disciples who were with him. Looking around at those who gathered before him, Jesus said, "Here are my mother and brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." What a powerful statement! His words spoke to a spiritual reality when it comes to family. We all have a flesh family: Those who we are related to because of a parent or parents, which we call our blood relatives, but Jesus spoke of a spiritual family. A spiritual family is those to whom believers are related not because of the flesh but because of faith. Jesus identified others as family based on their obedience to the Father, which always flows from faith in the Father. The church is a faith family, which comes from the Lord's own words about his relationship with us!

1. How would you define obedience to the will of the Father? How is this seen in your lives?
2. If you are a follower of Jesus – obeying God's will – how does Jesus define your relationship to him? What does this mean for your relationship to each other?

The early church treated one another as family, opening their homes and their hearts to disciple and to care for each other (Acts 2:42-47).

The reality of the words of Jesus related to family relationships among his people was beautifully displayed in the Spirit-filled life of the early church. In Acts 2 – where the church was born through the arrival of the gift of the Holy Spirit – God provided us an important glimpse into the historic church. In verses 42-47, the basic characteristics of the church are described, and one of these characteristics is the family. The early church acted like family! They worshiped together. They fellowshiped together. They served together. They ate together. They opened their homes to one another. They sacrificed to provide for one another. This is the picture of a family where people love one another and care for one another simply because of the deep, shared connection of a parent or



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parents! The church – the children of God – have the deepest, shared connection there is: An eternal connection with one another as the family of God.

1. What impresses you most about this picture of family in the early church?
2. How do you see characteristics of family in Acts 2 in your church today?

Paul understood that the church is the household of God that should help one another live like the children of God (1 Timothy 3:15).

As Paul wrote to Timothy, he understood that his schedule was the Lord's schedule. He was writing these things to Timothy so that if he was delayed, Timothy would still have the instruction he needed for his life and ministry and to lead the church to live in obedience and for the glory of the Lord. While the word church means the "called out ones" – those who are called out and assembled together – Paul used another important term to identify the church: The household of God! The church, which is the pillar and buttress of the truth, is a household, and it's not just any household. The church is the household of the one and only living God! It's a household where the children are born of faith. It's a household that's eternal and unchanging. It's a household where the Father has expectations for the way that his children must behave, which is that they should imitate him as beloved children (Eph. 5:1)! Paul understood that the church is the household of God that should help one another live like the children of God.

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to study the words "pillar and buttress of truth." What does this mean? How does it relate to the church?
2. Why does your behavior matter if you are a part of the household of God? How does this relate to the question above on how Paul defines the church: The household of God?
3. How do we help each other live for our Father as his household?

God's design for discipleship in his household is for cross-generational discipling, which mirrors family relationships in the home (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

Paul also understood that in the household of God, we have a responsibility to disciple each other. This is exactly what Paul was doing in this important letter to Timothy, who was his son in the faith. As Paul gave instruction for these discipling relationships in the church, the emphasis on family relationships and cross-generational discipleship is clear. Timothy should view those he shepherded as family! When an older man is in need of rebuke, Timothy should encourage him as a father. Similarly, he should look to and interact with younger men as brothers. When shepherding ladies, Timothy should do all things in purity as they are his faith family: Interacting with younger women as sisters and older women as mothers. What a beautiful picture of the pastor leading in the example of cross-generational discipling in the church. God's design for discipleship in his household is for cross-generational discipling, which mirrors family relationships in the home.

1. How have you experienced family relationships within your church?
2. Why is cross-generational discipling (as modeled by Christ and taught here by Paul to Timothy) so important in the church? How does this protect and grow the church?