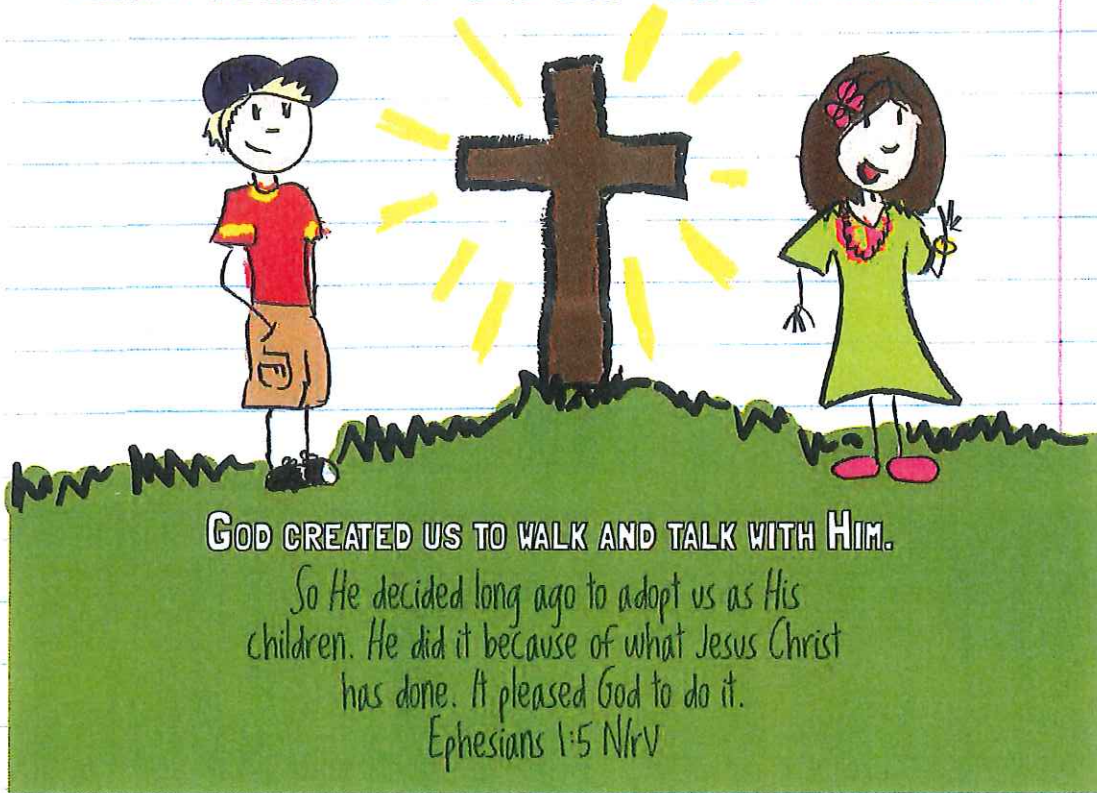


GOD LOVES YOU AND WANTS YOU IN HIS FAMILY!



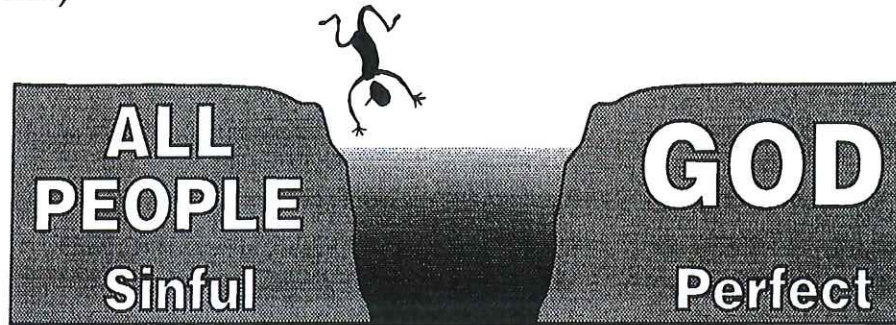
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The problem of Sin

You have done something that keeps you from enjoying that special relationship with God. The Bible explains it this way: ***“It is your evil [sin] that has separated you from your God.”*** (Isaiah 59:2 ICB)



God has given every person in this world the right to choose. You can choose to obey God and his ways, or you can choose to please yourself. Sin is choosing to go your own way instead of God's. Sin is putting what you want above what pleases God. Whenever you have chosen your own way over God's way, you have sinned.

Read this verse: ***“All people have sinned and are not good enough for God's glory.”*** (Romans 3:23)

★ How many people have sinned? _____

The Muddy Girl

Once there was a little girl who disobeyed her parents and played in the mud. When she came home, she planned to march right into the house. But her father stopped her. He first took her to the side of the house and used a hose to wash off the mud. Then he brought her into his home.

Although God loves you, you cannot come into his family when you are dirty with sin.

Since God is holy and perfect, he cannot stand sin. He cannot allow sin in his holy presence in heaven. Sin shuts us out of God's presence. Sin breaks up the relationship God desires to have with us. The price for choosing your own way over God's way is to be separated from God forever.

Read this verse: **"There is no one without sin. None!"** (Romans 3:10) Even though you try your best to do the right thing, are there ever times you fail to please God?

Think about it...

★ Are you guilty of breaking God's commands by sinning? Like...

- lying
- hating
- cheating
- stealing
- fighting
- being jealous
- teasing
- saying bad words
- being disrespectful to your parents

★ What would happen if you broke a law and the police arrested you?

You would receive a punishment, wouldn't you? Well, the same is true for breaking God's commands. Someone has to be punished. Someone has to pay the price. Read the first part of Romans 6:23: **"When someone sins, he earns what sin pays---death."**

★ What is the price for choosing your own way instead of God's way? _____

★ If you are guilty of choosing your own way (sin) instead of God's way, can you enter God's presence in heaven? _____

You may try really hard to bridge the gap between yourself and God. You may do lots of nice things for people. You may even go to church every Sunday. But none of that can make up for the bad things you did, or the good things you chose not to do. With the price for your sin not paid, you cannot enter heaven and be with God.

The Fix

So how can you fix this problem? You can't—but God did. God loves you. He made a way to save you from the punishment you deserve because of your sin. He made a way for you to be with him forever. Jesus, God's Son, came to earth to take the punishment you deserve.

Read this verse and answer the questions: ***“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son . . . that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life.”*** (John 3:16 ICB)

★ Who is God's only Son? _____

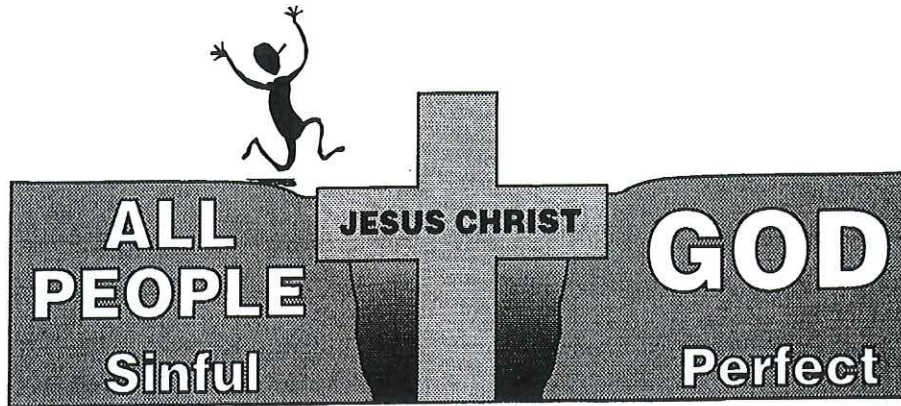
★ Why did God send his Son? _____

★ How can you have eternal life? _____

Now read all of Romans 6:23 (ICB): ***“When someone sins he earns what sin pays—death. But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

★ What free gift does God offer to us? _____

Picture it like this...



We are separated from God because of something **we** have done, but we are brought together with God because of something **Jesus** has done! Since eternal life is a gift, it cannot be earned. It can only be received. When you accept Jesus Christ and trust him as your Lord and Savior, you become part of God's family and receive eternal life.

Read this verse: ***“. . . you have been saved by grace because you believe. You did not save yourselves. It was a gift from God.”*** (Ephesians 2:8 ICB)

★ Eternal life is a _____ from God.

Just knowing about God's plan isn't enough. You must do something about it. You must trust Jesus by stepping onto the bridge that he built. You must accept the gift that God purchased for us when he sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins by dying on the cross.

Read this Bible verse: ***“But some people did accept him. They believed in him. To them he gave the right to become children of God.”*** (John 1:12 ICB)

★ What can you do to become a child of God? _____



You must believe Jesus took the punishment for your sins and accept him as your Lord and Savior.

Write your name in the blanks ...

God loved _____ so much
that he gave his one and only Son, that by believing in him, .
_____ will not die, but will live with God
forever.

By accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, _____
_____ has the right to become a child of God.

Believe Jesus

Put Your Life in God's Hands

There is nothing you can do to make up for the bad things you have done. No matter how hard you try, you can't restore the broken relationship with God on your own. That's why we need Jesus as our Savior.



The Bible says: ***“He saved us because of his mercy, not because of good deeds we did to be right with God.”*** (Titus 3:5a ICB)

- ★ Do our good deeds fix our broken relationship with God?
-

The only thing you can do to become part of God's family is to believe Jesus! Listen to God's promise:

“God makes people right with himself through their faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for all who believe in Christ . . .” (Romans 3:22 ICB)

- ★ Circle the words in Romans 3:22 that tell who is right with God.

To believe in Jesus means to trust Jesus by putting your life in his hands. Many people say they believe in Jesus. Their minds know facts about him. They may even say that Jesus died on the cross for the whole world. But knowing about Jesus is not the same as trusting Jesus with all your heart.

When you accept Jesus as your Savior, you must also trust him as your Lord and obey his commands. You can trust God because he loves you more than anyone and will always ask you to do what is best for you.

A Story of Trust

The newspaper told a story about a family that awoke one night to find their house on fire. The family escaped from the burning home... all except for the 10-year-old son named Tommy. The noise of the fire engines caused him to wake up, but the fire had spread too far for him to run downstairs. Tommy walked out onto the second-floor balcony. His only way to safety was to jump, yet all he could see below him was smoke.

Tommy then heard a voice urging him to jump. It was his dad. "Jump!" his father yelled.

Tommy cried, "How can I jump, Dad? I can't even see you!"

His father answered, "I can see you, Tommy. Jump! I promise I'll catch you!" Then Tommy hesitated for a moment. He thought about his dad's love for him. He knew his dad would keep his word, so he jumped safely into his dad's arms.



Tell Others That Jesus is Your Lord

When you claim Jesus as your Lord, you are willing to let others know. Have you ever been to a wedding? In a wedding, a man and a woman tell everyone in the audience that they have chosen to put the other person first in their life. It is important that they speak their promises. In a similar way, God wants us to be proud enough to tell others that Jesus is first in our life.



The Bible says: ***“If you use your mouth to say, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from death, then you will be saved.”*** (Romans 10:9)

In Matthew 16:15-16, Jesus asked his disciples to say who they thought he was. ***“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”*** In church, we call Peter’s words the “good confession.” New believers are asked to repeat Peter’s “good confession” for all the church to hear.

★ Do you think that this is the only time Christians are expected to say who they think Jesus is? _____

★ What are some other times you might be able to use your mouth to tell who Jesus is? _____

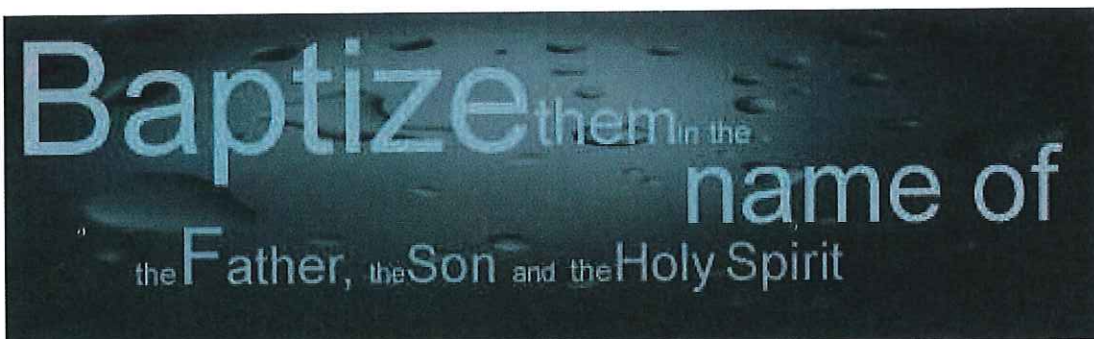
Be Baptized

Do you know what people in the Bible did whenever they decided to believe in Jesus and trust Him with their lives? They were baptized!

When Peter preached to people who wanted to be saved from eternal death, this is what he said: ***“Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*** (Acts 2:38 ICB)

★ Circle two things Peter said people should do if they want to make things right with God.

★ In your own words explain how baptism is a picture of what God had done for you. _____



Baptism is also a picture of what God is doing in us. As you are lowered into the water you show that Jesus has washed away your sins. When you are brought up out of the water, you show that Jesus has made you clean and that you are a new person. You are born again!

The Bible puts it this way: ***“So when we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. We were buried with him so that we could live a new life, just as Christ was raised from death by the wonderful power of the Father.”*** (Romans 6:4)

Jesus Is Baptized by John

At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John and wanted John to baptize him. But John tried to stop him. John said, “Why do you come to me to be baptized? I should be baptized by you!”

Jesus answered, “Let it be this way for now. We should do all things that are right.” So John agreed to baptize Jesus.

Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water. Heaven opened, and he saw God’s Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice spoke from heaven. The voice said, “This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him.”



★ In your own words explain how baptism is a picture of what God is doing in you. _____

When you give your life to God, he washes you clean of sin and fills you with his Spirit, making you his child. You look the same on the outside, but you are new on the inside.

Jesus gave you the ultimate example. He went and was baptized by John. If you wish to follow Jesus and become part of his family, then you will want to be as much like Jesus as possible. Baptism shows you are choosing to become obedient to Jesus and are serious about becoming a part of God's family.

Jesus not only gave us an example, but a clear command. In the Great Commission he said: **"Go everywhere in the world. Tell the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved."** (Mark 16:15-16 ICB) Jesus gave us a command. A command we should obey.

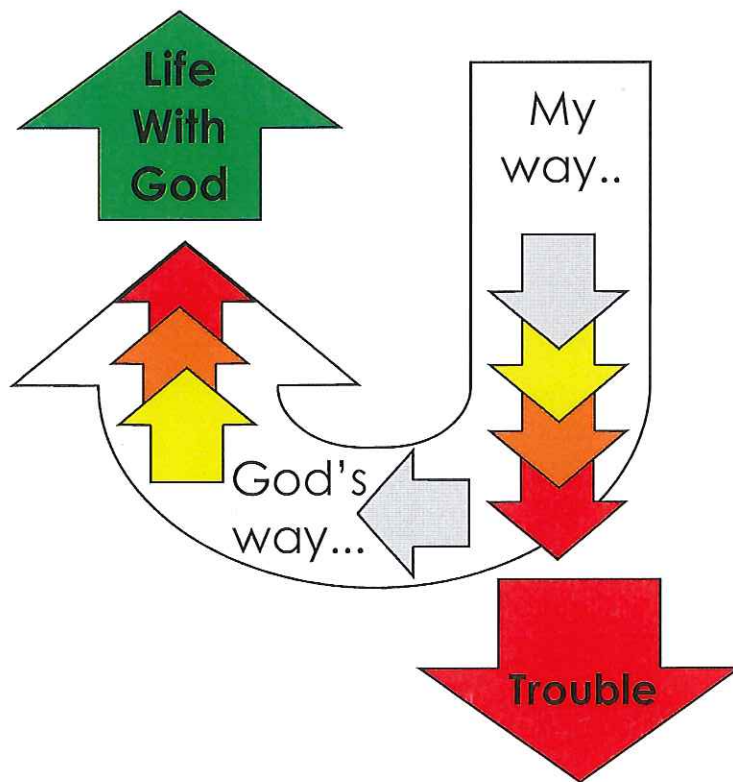
Be Like Jesus

When you enter God's family you are given a new name—Christian. Christian means “a little Christ.” A Christian has a special relationship with God. God is your Heavenly Father, and you are his child. The Bible says: ***“The Father has loved us so much! He loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children.”***

(1 John 3:1 ICB)

Turn From Sin

God is pleased when you turn away from sin and follow his ways! The Bible calls this “repentance.” Repentance is making a “u-turn” with your life.



When you become a Christian, you hate sin because it separates you from God. So you choose to do things that please God. ***“If anyone belongs to Christ, then he is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new!”*** (2 Corinthians 5:17 ICB)

But isn't this hard to do? It would be if you had to do it all by yourself. But as a member of God's family you are given a special helper—the Holy Spirit who lives in you to give you power to live for God. God then changes you from the inside out! The more you listen to the Holy Spirit, the more you will grow as a Christian to become more like Jesus. ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.”*** (Galatians 5:22, 23 ICB)

Even though you aren't perfect, God wants you to try your best to be like Jesus. ***“In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.”*** (Philippians 2:5 ICB) When you do that others will be able to see Jesus in you, and Jesus can reach others through you! God wants each member of his family to share the message of Christ so others can join God's family too!

W.W.J.D.

Ask yourself ***“What would Jesus do*** in difficult situations?” whenever you need help knowing the right thing God wants you to do. Then do it!

What are a couple of ways you could become more like Jesus?

1. _____

2. _____

Be a Responsible Child of God

When you are baptized into Jesus, you are also baptized into his church—God’s family. The Bible says: ***“We were all baptized into one body through one Spirit. And we were all made to share in the one Spirit.”*** (1 Corinthians 12:13b) You, together with all your brothers and sisters in Christ, are the body of Christ. ***“All of you together are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of that body.”*** (1 Corinthians 12:27 ICB)

Think about it . . .

- ★ What things do your own mother and father expect from you?
 - to listen and obey them?
 - to come to them when you need help?
 - to join the family for activities?
 - to use good manners at meals?
 - to share your toys and help around the house?
 - to keep yourself clean?
 - to respect them and be kind to your brothers and sisters?
- ★ Do you think God expects similar things from you when you become his child?

Listen and Obey

Have you ever tried to build a model without reading the instructions? If you have, you probably messed it up. God knows we need his instructions to keep from messing up our lives. That's why he gave us the Bible.

Look at 2Timothy 3:16: ***"All Scripture is given by God and is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching how to live right."***

God wants us to spend time with him every day, listening to him as we read the Bible. He wants us to choose to obey what he tells us to do in the Bible.



★ What is the Bible useful for? _____

Ask God for Help

Sometimes it's hard to do the right thing. God loves us and he cares about our struggles. The Bible says: ***"Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need. And when you pray, always give thanks."*** (Philippians 4:6 ICB)

★ Draw a circle around the words that tell us what we should do whenever we pray.

Attend Church

Hebrews 10:25 says: ***“You should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing. But you should meet together and encourage each other.”*** Sometimes our soccer team may schedule an extra practice on Sunday, or a friend may invite us to a sleepover on Saturday night. But God wants us to be with his family—the church—to worship him and encourage each other.

- ★ What is one thing we should do when we come to church each week? _____

Share in the Lord's Supper

We also gather with God's family to share in the Lord's Supper (communion). This is a time when you should take a close look at your life and check for any sin that may keep you from being a healthy part of Christ's body, the church. The Bible says: ***“Everyone should look into his own heart before he eats the bread and drinks the cup.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:28 ICB). Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, then answer the following questions:

- ★ What does the bread represent? _____
- ★ What does the cup represent? _____

During the Lord's Supper we also think about our relationships with others in God's family, the church. We share the Lord's Supper with Jesus himself and with all our brothers and sisters in the church. ***"There is one loaf of bread. And we are many people. But we all share from that one loaf. So we are really one body."*** (1 Corinthians 10:17 ICB)



Share What God Has Given You

God's children are happy to give part of their money and their time back to God. In Malachi 3:10 (ICB) God says: ***"Bring to the storehouse a tenth of what you gain. Then there will be food in my house. Test me in this . . . I will pour out more blessings than you have room for."*** God asks us to give a tenth (tithe) of what we earn back to him. This is our way of recognizing that everything we have comes from him. If you give ten cents from every dollar you earn for your allowance, you are tithing.

★ If you give a tithe from your allowance, how much would you give? _____

When we give extra money or time to God, perhaps for a special need, this is called an offering. This can be a way of telling God that you love him, or that you are thankful for something. God told us to tithe. Giving an offering is optional. ***"Each person should give what he has decided in his heart to give."***

(2 Corinthians 9:7 ICB)

“Everyone who believes in Jesus will be forgiven. God will forgive his sins through Jesus.” (Acts 10:43 ICB)

He

all of your sins.

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

He gives you the gift of the

_____.

“I write these things to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13 ICB)

You can know that you have _____

_____.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20 ICB)

Jesus will be with you

_____.

“We can come to God with no doubts. That means that when we ask God for things (and those things agree with what God wants for us), then God cares about what we say. God listens to us every time we ask him.” (1 John 5:14, 15 ICB)

He

your prayers.

“And now he can help those who are tempted. He is able to help because he himself suffered and was tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18 ICB)

He helps you when you are

_____.

Ready or Not?



Four Important Questions



Now that you know what it means to be a part of God's family, there are four very important questions for you to answer:

1. Are you sorry for disobeying God and are you willing to turn from your sinful ways and follow God's ways? _____
2. Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God, and that he died for your sins and rose from the dead? _____
3. Are you willing to publicly confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord? _____
4. Are you ready to be baptized and live as a member of God's family? _____

Serve God's family



God gives each of us special abilities, and he wants us to use these abilities to help in his church. ***“Let us think about each other and help each other to show love and do good deeds.”*** (Hebrews 10:24 ICB). God also wants us to treat our brothers and sisters in

Christ with love and respect. In Romans 12:10 we read: ***“Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give your brothers and sisters more honor than you want for yourselves.”*** And Romans 12:16 says: ***“Live together in peace with each other. Do not be proud, but make friends with those who seem unimportant.”***

Is there some lonely child at church with whom you could be friends? Pray about this.

Keep Your Body Clean

God's Holy Spirit lives in us, and he wants a clean home. I Corinthians 3:16 says: ***“You should know that you yourselves are God's temple. God's Spirit lives in you.”*** If you choose to smoke, or mess up your body with drugs or alcohol, you are not treating your body as a temple, a special dwelling for God's Holy Spirit. Bad thoughts are also like dirty, smelly things hanging around inside you.

God wants to help you make your body a good place for his Spirit to live. You can ask for his help using the words of Psalm 139: 23, 24 (ICB): ***“God, examine me and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any bad thing in me. Lead me in the way you set long ago.”***

- ★ What are some things God wants to help you clean out of your life? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Count on God's blessings

You are probably thinking that God has very high expectations for you, and you're right! God wants you to be the best that you can be, and he has promised to help you do that. Along with these high expectations come some very special blessings for members of God's family: