

# Rediscovering God's Church

Message No:6 and Picture # 4

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As we continue looking into the mirror of God's Word to find out what kind of people we are in His sight, we find one more picture of our selves. God truly wants us to understand how central we are to the outworking of His purposes on this earth.

The fourth picture taken from Paul's letter to Ephesians is that of a family. In the list of seven pictures of God's people, the fourth is in the centre. This is very appropriate because the family is central to our understanding of God's people. His people are seldom referred to by the title "Christians" or even "believers". The most common title used is brothers, emphasizing membership in one spiritual family.

Ephesians 2:18 reads ***"For through Him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit to the Father"***. Notice that all three persons of the Godhead are represented in this verse. Through Jesus the Son, we have access to the Father, by one Spirit. The next verse reveal an amazing, wondrous and astonishing result:

***"Now, therefore {because we have access to the Father}, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"***.(Eph 2:19)

The word **household** would be best represented in contemporary (current, modern, present-day) English by **family**. Because Christ has gained us access to the father, we have become members of God's family.

## Relationship to the Father.

God's family is determined by relationship to the Father. In the Greek New Testament, there is a very close similarity between the words *father* and *family*. The word for father is *pater* and the word for family is *patria*, which is derived from pater. This relation is brought out clearly in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-15

***"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"***. There is a direct play or connection between the words "Father" and "Family". From God the Father(pater) the whole family(patria) in heaven and earth is named. Family comes from fatherhood. So, again having God as our Father makes us members of His family. {Lord's Prayer}

This truth is further brought out by the writer of Hebrews:

***"For it was fitting for Him(God the father), for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons(believers) to glory, to perfect the author(the Lord Jesus) of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies(Jesus) and those who are sanctified(the believers) are all from one Father; for which reason He(Jesus) is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying{quoting from the Old Testament}"I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praises"***. Hebrews 2:10-12 NASB)

There is a beautiful revelation in this passage. God has made us His Sons through Jesus, and Jesus Himself is the only begotten Son of God the Father. Therefore, Jesus acknowledges us as His brothers because of our relationship to the Father.

Jesus never did anything without the Father leading the way. {Refer to John 5:19}.

Jesus did not call us "brothers" until the Father called us "Sons". Then He acknowledged us as His brothers.

There are two main features of this particular revelation that emphasize the idea of fatherhood.. The primary and decisive feature is a shared life-source. When we all share the same life-source, we are members of the same family. The Father is the source of every family—heavenly or earthly. A family is not a denomination or a label, nor it is an organization or an institute. A family is a family because it has a shared life-source.

**Secondly**, God’s Fatherhood has relational implications in two directions: vertical and horizontal. The vertical is the relationship that each of us has to God as Father. The horizontal is the relationships we all have to one another as members of the same family. The vertical relationship to God is primary, but it also gives us a horizontal responsibility to one another. We cannot claim to be God’s sons/Children, if we do not acknowledge His other Sons as our brothers/siblings.

These two relationships—the vertical and the horizontal, within the family of God are beautifully exemplified by the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer: *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*(Matt 6:9).

Two very important words occur right at the beginning of this prayer: “Our Father”. In the original Greek, it is actually “Father Our”. So the 1<sup>st</sup> word is Father, which is the decisive word. Jesus is saying “keep in mind that through me, you become children of God. Always approach God as your Father. Don’t come to Him only as God, because He is God over everyone. Come to Him as your loving heavenly Father, with whom you are now in right relationship”.

The second word is our—not “my” Father, but “our” Father. What does this means? In coming to God as “our” Father, we acknowledge that He has many children, you are not the only child. All of God’s other children are your brothers and sisters. This acknowledgment rules out self—centeredness on our part.

In John 14, when Jesus was talking to the disciples about the Father, one of the them said “Lord, show us the Father”(V8). This grieved Jesus, and He said “ I have been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “show us the Father”? (John 14:9).

Just before that, in John 14:6, Jesus said “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”. People often quote this Scripture but very rarely they complete it. Jesus said “I am the way” but a way is not an end in itself. A way is meaningless unless it leads us somewhere. Where does Jesus, the way, leads us? To the father! We have not fulfilled the purpose of God if we merely find the way. What we have to find is the end of the way! The primary mission of Jesus Christ is not to bring us to Himself, but to bring us to the Father.

***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.***(1-Peter 3:18) God’s purpose is to gather in a great family of children patterned after His Son Jesus. Everything, is working together for good along the line of this purpose, so that we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Another central concept that this picture of family evoke(bring to mind) in our relationship to God as our Father, is **obedience**.

The revelation of God’s Fatherhood is what will bring the children to maturity. Even as they are perfected through suffering like Jesus.

Hebrews 5:8 reads ***“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”***. Thus Jesus became the pattern and the pathway for us. Jesus was

never disobedient, yet He had to learn obedience. You and I have to learn it in the same way He did: by obeying! There is no other way. {Actually the relationship between the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus) is a great study of relationship of a father bringing a son into maturity}. We don't find out what obedience is by sitting and listening to sermons on obedience. These sermons may help us or motivate us, but obedience is **learned by doing**.

The key phrase in the obedience of Jesus was ***“not My will but Yours be done”***. (Lk22:42). Every step of obedience in the Christian Life is a step of self-denial. Jesus said if anyone desires to come after Him, he must deny himself (Mt 16:24). This is always painful because our ego never likes to be denied.

While our vertical relationship to God can be characterized in this context as obedience, our horizontal responsibility to our brothers and sisters, is a special kind of divine love called agape in Greek. Love is not a spiritual gift, but the outworking of character. In Peter's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, we see 7 progressive steps that bring us to this special kind of *agape* love. ***“ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith Virtue, to virtue Knowledge, to knowledge Self-control, to self-control Perseverance, to perseverance Godliness, to godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to brotherly kindness Love(agape)”***{2-Peter 1:5-7}.

The Scripture says “Add to your faith” So, we start with/on the basis of faith and then we add the seven things to that faith in succession:

1. Virtue
2. Knowledge (knowing God's will)
3. Self-control (temperament)
4. Perseverance (Patience, endurance)
5. Godliness (holiness)
6. Brotherly kindness (goodwill toward men)
7. Love (agape)

The attitude that love means merely giving somebody an embrace at a prayer meeting is not in line with Scripture. Love is something that has to be cultivated and achieved. The word *agape* means, in particular “I love my enemies”. When we are able to love our enemies, we have made it to the top.

We need to accept one another as brothers and sisters because God has accepted us as His family. The essential feature of this picture of family is our shared life-source. May the good Lord help us understand and experience our place/position as members of the household of God {members of God's family}.....Amen