



# The Church as God's Family

(Note to leaders - when a question in the study is followed by possible answers, these are for your benefit, try to encourage your group to come up with answers for themselves)

We see God progressively revealing Himself and His character as we travel through His Word. In the first verse of the Bible He reveals he is Elohim - Supreme God, Strong one, the mighty creator of all things.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God (**Elohim**) created the heavens and the earth

Elohim is used 2,570 time in scripture, and as we move though His story, He reveals himself in over one hundred names.

Genesis 1:26&28

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock... God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Q *What was man to do?*

- Rule over all creation
- Be fruitful and increase in number
- Fill earth and subdue it

Q *What did God say after He had created all things?*

- It was very good

All that God created was good and there was harmony and a perfect family.

## 1. Breakdown of the family

Q *What happens in Genesis 3?*

- The temptation and fall of man

Gen 3: 8-9

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. "But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Q *Why did they hide?*

- Sin entered and separated God from man

- Their relationship was broken

One chapter later, in Genesis 4 Cain kills his brother Abel.

*Q Why do you think Cain did this?*

- Anger
- Jealousy of his brother, whose offering, unlike his, had been acceptable to God

God had warned Cain that sin was crouching at his door ready to overwhelm him but he must rule it (Gen 4:7).

James 1:14-15

but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

*Q What can we learn from Cain's example and from this verse from James?*

- Sin starts in our thoughts
- What we allow to be entertained in our thoughts often leads to action
- Sin is progressive, it starts small but if unchecked leads to spiritual death

Later in this chapter (4) we see the further breakdown of family in the account of Lamech.

By Genesis 6 there is so much wickedness all over the earth that God must destroy the earth with a flood.

Time and time again there are a break downs in family relationship. But God is looking for a family that they might be a blessing.

Gen 12: 1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."<sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

*Q Who was to be the blessing to all families of the earth?*

- Jesus Christ
- God keeps his promise

## **2. Restoration in the family.**

Eph 2: 4-5 & 11-19

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.....Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in

Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household

*Q What were we before we became part of God's household?*

- Gentiles
- Without the Messiah
- Excluded from Citizenship
- Foreigners to the covenant of promise
- Without hope and without God

*Q What is our position now in Christ Jesus?*

- Brought near by the blood of Christ
- Reconciled to God
- Have access to God
- No longer foreigners & strangers but fellow citizens with the saints
- As members of God's household now part of a large family

1 Tim 3:15

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

*Q Do you feel part of a family at City Hill?*

### **3. How family treat one another.**

Let's look at Romans 12 for some very practical yet profound applications.

Romans 12:9-13

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

*Q What is sincere love?*

- Love must be without hypocrisy
- A Hypocrite was an actor who wore a mask, so obviously he was putting on a show to entertain people, behind the mask he was a different person.

*Q We often speak about grace and love but what does Paul say about evil?*

*Q Should we ignore sinful behaviour?*

- No - but must be sensitive in how you deal with it

Harold spoke of treating older men as fathers, older women as mothers, your equal as brother and sisters, younger as sons and daughters, when dealing with sinful behaviour.

Discuss v11-13 and how they should work out in our lives.

*Q Who do we practice hospitality towards?*

- Not only those you know, but rather invite those you do not know

God created family - it was, and is, His plan for how we would relate to each other. Family was broken at the fall, but God restored our relationship with Him through His son, Jesus, and now in the Church we are the family of God. We can demonstrate to the world how family can live and relate to each other - bringing glory to God.