

THE BIG IDEA: The heart of God is for the family of God.

The Take-Off

Last week we kicked off our first series of 2021 called “This Is Us” with the most critical truth: we are His, and that means that we’ve been chosen by God in order that we can set ourselves apart for God.

Everything that comes in this series hinges on that truth. There’s no US if you and I aren’t in Christ.

We have to be His before this can be us.

So let me say the same thing I often do before I start teaching: if you are here and you aren’t a Jesus follower, we’re so glad you came. We know that you’ll learn something and it will feel like life coaching, but these truths are true of those who have trusted Jesus to save them.

Those who have said that they are HIS.

You can do that at anytime. No need to wait until the end of the service or for a special call to the altar.

Literally, you can say, “Jesus, you did for me what I could never have done. I confess that I need you to save me and transform me. I’m Yours, not just here in this service, but forever. Thank you for saving me.”

When you do that, you’ll find that this second truth about The Gathering will also be true of you: **We are family.**

Some scripture to help convince all of us of that truth:

Ephesians 2:11-13 (NLT) / We were separated from God

Romans 8:15-17 (NLT) / We were adopted by God

Psalms 68:6 (NLT) / We were positioned by God

All of this was about family. He could have saved us and left us alone. Or He could have left us in our sin and surrounded us with a bunch of other sinners.

But His desire was that we would be family. And we are.

Families aren’t always the picture we see in our minds. They’re all different. All messy. All complicated.

That’s why I love this family pictures so much.

[Funny Family Photos]

Family is real, and when we’re in a family, I can think of 4 things that we know we’ll have:

1. Family means connection

- a. When God said in Genesis that it’s not good for man to be alone, it was about so much more than marriage
- b. We need connection, and family means connection
- c. A common connection to God but an uncommon connection to one another
- d. **Ephesians 3:16-21 (NIV)**
 - v. 16 / We all have connection to the Father’s power
 - v. 18 / We need to have it “together with all the Lord’s people”
- e. It’s in the togetherness that we understand the fullness of His love
- f. Trees can teach us something: their roots connect below the soil and actually give life to one another
- g. A German forester found an old stump that was still producing chlorophyll - impossible except for the fact that trees send life to one another through the connected root system
- h. If one tree is diseased, the others send nutrients to it until it recovers
- i. How much more should the spiritual root system of the church keep us connected?
- j. Our enemy takes an axe to these roots ALL THE TIME - it is his goal to keep us disconnected
- k. **There will be offense, so there must be forgiveness**
- l. Hebrews 12:15 speaks of a “root of bitterness”
- m. That’s what offense does - it poisons the root system
- n. Forgiveness purifies what offense poisons

2. Family means protection

- a. Connection is huge because it reminds us that others have our back
- b. **Family means protection!**
- c. **There will be attack, so there must be defense**
- d. We need to make sure the attacks come from the outside, not from within
- e. Basically, this is the “no one talks about my family” principle

- f. Did you know that when one tree is attacked, signals are sent through the roots to warn all the trees?
- g. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)** / this isn't just about being productive; we've got to have one another's backs

3. Family means correction

- a. Here's the third thing family means: **family means correction**
- b. **Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)**
- c. **Ephesians 4:14-16 (NLT)**
- d. **There will be conflict, so there must be commitment**
- e. We need family to correct us when we're being tossed and blown around
- f. Do we like it? No. Do we need it? Yes. It makes us look more and more like Christ. (Eph. 4:15)

4. Family means direction

- a. Finally, **family means direction**
- b. It means that I know what to do and how to do it because it's in my DNA as a member of the family
- c. Family provides the agreement necessary for movement
- d. **Amos 3:3 (NLT)** / we can't walk together if we don't agree on the goal
- e. But the opposite is true, too. When we do agree, watch out!!
- f. Why does our enemy attack unity so strongly?
- g. Psalm 133:3 / it's where the blessing is
- h. **There will be confusion, so there must be alignment**

The Landing

Let me leave you with this Big Idea: **the heart of God is for the family of God**

His desire has always been that those who are outside the family would be brought into the family

Anything that works against family isn't from the Father

We are family. The enemy hates it, but the Father protects it.

Let's pray.