

☞ What is the Church?

The Family of God

☞ Church = ekklesia... **people called forth with a purpose**

☞ Here's our creed regarding the Church: ***"I am part of the Church, which is God's primary means of accomplishing His purposes on Earth."***

☞ **Naomi** – Last week Phil talked about how **The Church is... we are... the Temple of God: We are his People; we are Prepared; we welcome his Presence**

Now, today we're going to be taking a look at how the church is like a family. We both come from strong families. Both of our families enjoy good relationships throughout and both families are all Christians. In fact, out of 16 couples all but two are licensed ministers. And, even those two are very involved in their churches.

Getting Together (lyrics)

*There's nothing better than getting together with friends and family
Reminiscing while the others listen to our favorite memories
It's so much fun, it's second to none to have the time to share
The harmony of our unity is far beyond compare*

*There's Uncle Bob and there's Aunt Sue, and Cousin Joey, too
And when we're all together it's something like a zoo
We sit around and chew the fat all day into the night
We stay up late and eat too much, it's really quite a sight
And when it's time to leave, there's always some that cry
We have such fun the time just flies, it's hard to say goodbye*

*In church in much the same as any family
There's Brother George and Sister Ruth, there's toddlers and there's teens
And every Sunday morning we gather once again
To thank the Lord and give him praise for covering all our sin
He's the one who made the way for us to live in peace
And joyfully we share this life in God's big family*

☞ **The church is... we are... the Family of God**

Ephesians 2:18-19

no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens; members of God's household

☞ **Ephesians 3:14-21**

☞ **Naomi - Rooted in love**

Love is a fundamental aspect of family. Family is a safe haven; the Wizard of Oz popularize the phrase, "There's no place like home"; we've all heard "Home is where the heart is." As God's family we are to be loving and kind, like a good family should be.

The Family was and is designed by God. It was designed to be a place of safety from the world. It's an environment where the art of nurturing takes place. It's a place where children are born and raised. It's where love takes place on a daily basis. It's where encouragement is dished out in large doses and, where discipline is found and respect is taught. (This could equally describe what the Church is supposed to be like.)

Strong families are deeply committed to promoting each other's happiness and welfare. They are also committed to the family group which is reflected in the amount of time and energy they invest there. When life gets too hectic, strong families sit down and eliminate some activities and involvements so that their family relationships and lives can be happier and more satisfying. Family stability and cohesion are high priorities. This should also be true for the church, God's family.

☞ "brothers" is used around **180** times in the NT to refer to believers.

☞ **Naomi** I'm reminded of our Scripture memory for this month from Philippians 4:8...
"finally, brothers..."

The word "**father**" is used over **1600** times in the bible; more than prayer, praise and worship all combined! In the Gospels and Acts, Jesus preferred to call God "Father," using the name 171 times. He taught us to pray, "Our Father..." All of Paul's letters refer to God as "Father" in the greeting.

1 John 3:1

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

☞ Fatherhood is an important concept in the Scripture, so... **Dads, be involved with your family!**

☞ **Naomi** – --Tony Evans... *Around 70% of all prisoners come from fatherless homes. Nearly 80% of all rapists come from fatherless homes. 71% of high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. 63% of teen suicides come from fatherless homes or abusive fathers. Virtually every adult social pathology has been linked to either fatherless homes or homes with a father or husband who was absent, abusive, or neglectful.*

You can see how important the influence of Dad can be, so men, will you set aside some extra time this week just to be with your family?

--Readers' Digest... Dad: He's a mess-maker, ruler-breaker, risk-taker. In general, he's the opposite of Mom, the master nurturer, creator of law and order. But for all his mischief, Dad is doing something quite right. The same daddy-like interactions that sometimes annoy moms will significantly contribute to children's social skills and success in school. Moms and Dads are indeed different... but their distinctive styles of caretaking complement each other perfectly to the advantage of children.

Dads carry a lot of weight in a family: Biblically, he's the Head of the home; Principle provider; Principle protector; Responsible in God's eyes for godly instruction and training; typically, the final disciplinarian

☞ The father is the **spiritual representative of God** in the home. When Jesus taught us to pray, He taught us to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven." In fact, sometimes the reason people have trouble with faith in God, is because they had a father who set a bad example.

These are significant charges that a father must carry. While they may struggle at times, most dads feel the weight of these responsibilities. And they need to be respected and honored for their contributions.

☞ **Naomi** – Ladies and kids, will you do something special this week to honor the men in your life?

☞ **Basic family relations... both home family and church family:**

Ephesians 4:2-3

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

☞ We've talked before about needing to "**put up with**" each other. This is especially true in families, including in-laws. A little **humility** and **gentleness** goes a long ways. Unity requires hard work...

Every family tree always produces nuts.

☞ **Naomi** – Even though our two families are very similar, we have found that there are still differences. So, we decided a long time ago that "when in Rome, do as the Romans do..." The Mathews sometimes have a 3 hour Christmas gift-opening marathon... The Waldo family is early to rise even on holidays...

Ephesians 5:21

☞ **submit to one another** out of reverence for Christ.

On different occasions and for varying reasons, each one in the family will need to let the other family members take precedence.

☞ **Show love and respect.** Children, respect and obey your parents, because it's right and God is pleased by it. Parents, especially fathers, don't be so hard on your kids that it drives them to rebellious anger. (Same thing with church family... love and respect!)

☞ **Naomi** - Disrespect was always the ultimate "no-no" in our house. Other things could be discussed, but disrespect always got immediate discipline. *(There's a difference between breaking the rules and being sassy. Sometimes moms can be too gentle and put up with disrespect – Phil always enforced the respect for me above all; that made me feel very loved.)* Respect is an important value in most venues of life.

☞ Respect and **encourage** your child's **individuality**. *(Jake and Michelle are very different. Jake loved being active, so we encouraged sports; Michelle loved drawing, so we encouraged art.) (Church family has quite a variety of personalities and preferences)*

☞ **Naomi** – **Another basic component of family life is to simply be there.** Attend your kid's events as often as possible. We sat in the rain and in freezing conditions to watch Jake play soccer. Even now, when Jake coaches high school soccer, we try to be there even though he's just standing on the sidelines. We made trips all over the state to attend Michelle's concerts. And, now when she needs help setting up her elementary classroom, we're there to help out. This should be the same in the church family as well. Be faithful to attend Church activities. Be here to help out, and so on. Hebrews 10:25... don't give up meeting together...

☞ **Set expectations.** Good grades; purity; dating guidelines; godly men & women. *"Have fun and be good; if you can only do one, then be good."* Like a good coach or fitness trainer, parents need to know that kids need some prompting to reach their potential.

☞ **OUR VALUES FOR OBCers...** *(our expectations)*

The people of Open Bible Church should embrace and exemplify these values.

Personal, Practical, Powerful

To be developing a relationship with God through prayer and the Bible

To be becoming more and more Christ like

Personal

To be an active participant in a small group

To be reaching those who need Jesus

Practical

To be actively involved in the 5 key practices of the Church (worshipping, fellowshiping, serving, discipling, and evangelizing).

To be a scriptural giver of tithes and offerings

Powerful

To be filled, fellowshiping, and flowing with the Holy Spirit
To be using spiritual gifts in ministry

☞ **Naomi** – Here's another component of family life... **Discipline.** It's a good idea to set guidelines in advance and to distinguish between immaturity and rebellion. But when there's rebellion, discipline is necessary. Also, understand that one size does not fit all and it's okay to adjust as needed. I always had the policy to unapologetically get in their stuff. There rooms were not off-limits. Be their parents before being their friends. This one is not pleasant, but sometimes is required in the church family too. You may have noticed that sometimes Phil's sermons kind of "step on your toes."

Don't just give your kids everything they want.

☞ - **Teach them patience** by making them wait. (*We put Christmas and birthday presents out several days early. Church, we need to practice patience as well.*)

☞ **Naomi - Teach them productivity** by making them earn it. (*Both of the kids did ironing or laundry for mom in order to get something they wanted.*) *As members of the church family we should all be productive too.*

Church... it's not all about what you want, or even about meeting all your needs. Remember, we talked about how the church is not a store at which you shop for all your wants and needs. Church is more like a family, and the pastor is something like a dad. My job and calling as your leader is not to give you everything you want. It's not just to make you feel good. It's to provide what you need and help you grow in your faith.

☞ **It's not all about you.** Part of your marriage is showing your kids how to keep commitments and to love and respect others. Church... You're not here just to get something for yourself; you might be here because you can help someone else!

☞ **Naomi – Families should encourage positive attitudes.** Life is what you make of it. "You will have as much fun as you decide to have." I remember asking Jake about an event he was preparing to go to and I asked if he thought it was going to be fun. He said, "well, I'm going to be there, so of course it will." I've always believed that the grass is ont greener on the other side of the fence, but instead "Grass is greener where you water it."

☞ **A sense of humor** goes a long ways.

- Learn to laugh at yourself. (*at a family gathering Chelle was doused by water from a tent*)
- Don't always take life so seriously.
- Have fun together! (*Table games; weirdness is awesome; Jake and I get the dog to howl by sustaining off-pitch notes; I do a mean Chewbacca growl at random times*) (*It's okay to have fun at church, too. In fact, that's one thing many newcomers are looking for.*)

☞ **Here's some of our practical suggestions...**

Eat together; Play together; Pray together; Worship together; Make memories together

☞ **Naomi** - Church, we are family. Like it or not, we'll be in close proximity for all of eternity. We may as well learn to get along now. Think of the ideal family... God's family is the ultimate family. We are each part of it. We belong. Remember who you are! You are part of the family of God!

☞ **Video: Church is Family**

☞ **The Church is... the Body of Christ; the Temple of God; the Family of God**

Men's Huddle: Whether you have children or not, you are a father figure in this church. You create an image of what God is like. To be a good father, you don't have to be the toughest, the smartest, or even the most fun guy in the room. One of the most important aspects of good fatherhood is being involved! I always tried to be there for my kids... And, I always tried to set the example. Let's do the same in all of our families and here with the family of God. Be involved; set the example. We can do it!