

“A New Family”

7: A Lenten Series #3

John 17:20-23 NLT - 20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. 22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

There is one path to unity among believers and it begins with abiding in God. He is not impressed with our programs, our music or our attendance reports. God's desire is for intimacy with each of us that leads to unity among all of us.

What is the difference between being uniform and unified? Can you be unified and still hold different opinions?

WRAP-UP

Jesus gave us a new definition of “family”. We are all members of God's family when we do God's will. And Jesus' desire is that we would love one another with the same love He had for us. A love that sacrifices and forgives, bears with and cares for one another. We can't do that apart from Him in us. The path to loving others is by abiding in God, so that He loves through us. It is only when we are united with Christ that we can be unified with other believers.

MEMORY VERSE

Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."
- Mark 3:31-35 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Reach out to a member of your “spiritual family” this week in a way that demonstrates Jesus' love for them through you.

INTRODUCTION

It must have been incredibly painful for those who loved and followed Jesus to watch Him from the foot of the cross. Among those who stood faithfully by were some of His disciples and His family. One of the seven phrases spoken by Jesus from the cross was directed to them. He said to His disciple John, “Behold your mother” after telling His mother Mary, “Behold your son” referring to John. In that moment Jesus redefines our understanding of family.

Ice Breaker

How many were there in the family you grew up in?

Key Passage

John 19:25-27 ESV

25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. A Different Perspective on Family

During the time of His earthly ministry, Jesus held a unique perspective on who He consider as “family”. Mary could attest to the unique circumstances of the birth of her son. And although we have no reason to doubt that she experienced the role of a mother as Jesus was a boy, the first time we find recorded in scripture that seemed to

indicate Jesus' unique perspective on his family was when He was separated from His family at the age of twelve.

Luke 2:48-50 NLT - 48 His parents didn't know what to think. "Son," his mother said to him, "why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere." 49 "But why did you need to search?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 But they didn't understand what he meant.

Mary was not only an eyewitness, but facilitated the circumstances surrounding Jesus' first public miracle when water was turned into wine. She was more than His birth mother, she was also His disciple.

Who did Jesus identify as His family in Mark 3:35?

Mark 3:31-35 NLT - 31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. 32 There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, "Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you." 33 Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" 34 Then he looked at those around him and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. 35 Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Although Mary had blood relatives, even other sons, Jesus reinforced this idea of a "new family" when He directed Mary and John to "behold" (*ide-an imperative form of the verb*) their new relationship. This wasn't a casual suggestion but a declaration which they understood, because from that point on Mary moved into John's home.

Why do you think it was better for Mary to live with John than with relatives? What are some of the strongest relationships you've experienced outside of your blood relatives?

2. The Distinctive Mark of the New Family

John 13:33-35 NLT - 33 Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. 34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

We saw in Mark 3:35 that those doing God's will are considered Jesus' family. So we ask ourselves, "What is God's will?" In regards to the family of God, Jesus defined the distinctive mark of His disciples as love for one another in John 13:35.

What are the circumstances during which Jesus gives this commandment? What type of love does He command us to have?

1 John 3:14 NLT - 14 If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead.

1 John 4:20 NLT - 20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

What is your response to the idea that "I don't feel like I can love some people"? Do you believe you have a choice in loving someone?

Through forgiveness, forbearance, caring for, and sharing with, we express our love for others. These are a natural result of spending time in God's presence and allowing His love to live in you and through you.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 NLT - 12 And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 NLT - 9 But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another.

What are some of the things you've observed that commonly keep us from expressing God's love to our "spiritual family" the way God desires us to? We need to recognize these and do our part to keep them from derailing God's plan for His family's loving relationships.

3. Oneness – Unity in the Family

There is another demension to the love of the family of God. It is an expression of unity. Jesus specifically prayed for you to experience this in John 17:20 – 21.