

Are you in the Family of God?

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Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

Fathers have an awesome responsibility and in today's society, too often they are released of their God given obligation to provide for their children and to take care of their families. The family name at one time was protected and people were careful not to tarnish their heritage by dishonoring the name. There was a sense of pride in being the son or daughter of a prominent citizen, successful businessman or a scholar. Fathers were looked up to and respected. Women stood behind their husbands and encouraged them to take the leadership in the home thus providing the protection, spiritual leadership and guidance that formed a secure foundation for future generations to build on.

I listened to a Christian man telling his story on radio last week. It was interesting to me. A man was sharing a story of how his sister-in-law had traced the family tree back for several generations and discovered that their family had been devout Christians for over six generations. Before that time the women in the family attended church faithfully, but the men were not as dedicated to God. There was a definite change in the family tree after one man in their ancestry tree found Jesus Christ and began to teach his family to respect and honor God and to obey his word. That started the chain of events that resulted in six generations being faithful in Christian service to Jesus Christ. He married into this family and his wife was a devout Christian but he admitted that after he had been married for a few years, he began placing recreation and work ahead of spiritual matters within his own family unit. He attended church on Sunday but during the week, work, fishing, hobbies and relaxation took up the majority of his time and his wife finally called him on it. Their three sons were growing up without their father taking responsibility for their spiritual training. He did some soul searching and decided that the facts that his loving wife had pointed out were true. He then called a family meeting and talked to them about some ideas that he had come up with to make devotions fun and interesting for everyone. He wanted it to be a time that everyone would look forward to sharing and learning about Jesus Christ and how to allow his word to be their guide for life. His wife helped him plan events, projects, and the family began to pray together, study the Bible together and held family discussions around the table concerning spiritual things. He told of how hard it was at first for him to shift his priorities and sometimes even the children had to remind him of their allotted time, but gradually he began to see the results of his efforts. His children are grown now and his youngest son left for college this past year. Once a month the family still have family devotions by conference calls on the phone for 1 hour to continue the family tradition. When his youngest son left home to attend college, the family wondered if he would be able to squeeze out the time that had been dedicated to this since the first child left home. Sure enough when the date and time came, the boy was on the line with his family. When asked how he managed it, he told his father, "I was

working on a project but when the time came for me to call home; I excused myself and told the group that I would be back in an hour. When I got back people were curious about where I had gone and I told them that our family has family devotions once a month and I will not be the one to break the tradition.” This family plans on continuing the tradition for the rest of their lives. Their sons who are married have brought their wives on board with this and they are totally committed to raising their families just as they have been raised. What a powerful testimony and wonderful heritage for future generations.

Jesus declared in John 18:36 that his kingdom is not of this world. Everyone that is of the truth hears his voice. Pilate asked the question, “What is truth?” This is interesting since Pilate had these words written over the cross of Jesus: “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” It was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. When the chief priests of the Jews saw what was written, they asked him not to write “The King of the Jews; instead write “that he said, I am the king of the Jews.” Pilate refused to change the wording.

When a sacrificial lamb was brought to the priest by the Jewish people, a bronze tag bearing the name of the family was placed around the neck of the lamb so when the priest offered it, God would accept it as a sin offering for that family. The lettering on the cross spelled YHWH in Hebrew when only the first letter of each word was used. This is the name that the Jews recognized as God’s name. God ordained for his name to be placed above his “Holy Lamb of God” that takes away the sin of the world.

In Hebrews 11:13-16, it reminds us that God’s people are pilgrims and strangers in this world. Believers desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has prepared a city for them.

In John 15:16-18, Jesus warned his disciples that the world hated him and that the world would also hate those who believe on his name. Those who hate Jesus Christ hate his Father also. The world will persecute God’s children because they don’t know who God is. Romans 8:28-39 says “God is at work in all people who love him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose and he has always known who his chosen ones would be. He had decided to let them become like his own Son, so that his Son would be the first of many children. God then accepted the people he had already decided to choose and he has shared his glory with them. If God is on our side, can anyone be against us? God didn’t keep back his Son, for he gave him for us.” Stand on the promises of God. He declares that nothing can separate us from God’s love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord! In everything we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus one night, he told Jesus that the Jewish leaders recognized that God had sent him to teach the people for he could not work these miracles unless God was with him. Jesus answered him by saying, “I tell you for certain that you must be born from above before you can see God’s kingdom.” Nicodemus didn’t understand and asked how that could be; would a person return to his mother’s womb in order for a second birth to take place?

Jesus told him that before a person can enter the kingdom of God, he must experience a natural birth by water and also experience a birth in the Spirit. Humans give life to their children, yet only God's Spirit can change you into a child of God. Don't be surprised when you hear that you must be born again. Only God's Spirit gives new life.

We need the name of Jesus written in our hearts!

In Romans 10:8 it tells us who will be accepted as children of God. It is those who have faith in Jesus Christ and those who speak the truth saying that Jesus is Lord. If you believe with all your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, God will accept you and save you. You need to truly believe this and tell others. The Scriptures declare that no one who has faith will be disappointed, no matter if that person is a Jew or a Gentile. There is only one Lord and he is generous to everyone who asks for his help. All who call out to the Lord will be saved.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church in 1 Corinthians 1:2 these words:

To God's church in Corinth: Christ Jesus chose you to be his very own people, and you worship in his name, as we and all others do who call him Lord.

Acts 2:38 tells us to "Repent, and be baptized in Jesus name for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In this Chapter of Corinthians the people were arguing over who was the person they should be following. Some said it should be Paul, some Apollos or Peter or Christ. He set them straight for he told them that Jesus was the one who died for their sins and they should be baptized in his name. We belong to Jesus Christ and his name is placed on our souls.

In Jude 24 it tells us to offer praise to God our Savior because of our Lord Jesus Christ! Only God can keep you from falling and make you pure and joyful in his glorious presence. Before time began and now and forevermore, God is worthy of glory, honor, power and authority. Amen

In Revelation 3:12 there is a promise made to everyone who wins the victory. They will be made into a pillar in the temple of God and they will stay there forever. God will write on each of them the name of God and the name of his city and "I will write upon him my new name". In Revelation 14:1, it speaks of having the name of God written in the foreheads of those that are chosen.

In 1 John 5:5 it asks the question, "Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost and these three are one.

1 John 4:11-16 tells us that herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us because he has given us his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father

sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells with him and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us.

See 1 John 5:10. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believeth not God has made him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the son of God has not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Verse 20 says that we know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Are you in the family of God? Is his name written on your heart? The characteristics of a true believer are as follows:

John 13:35: I am going to give you a new commandment, that you love one another even as Jesus Christ loves you and gave his life for you. If you love one another, everyone will know that you are my disciple.

Romans 12 & 13: Keep your bodies pure and pleasing to the Lord as a living sacrifice. Let God change the way you think so you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him. Use your gifts and talents for the glory of God, not just for personal pleasure or satisfaction. Be sincere in your love for others; hate evil and cling to the things that are good. Love each other as brothers and sisters and honor them more than you do yourself. Never give up. Earnestly follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord. Be patient in times of trouble and never stop praying. Let love be your only debt. If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands. In the Law there are many commands such as “Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not want what belongs to others. But all these are summed up in the command that says to love others as you love yourself. No one who loves others will harm them. So love is all that the Law demands!

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! Romans 5:8.