



Series: A **TIME** For....

Session	Date	Title
1	7 th Nov	Family
2	14 th Nov	Friends
3	21 st Nov	God



SESSION 1: A Time For Family

Read: John 1: 1-13; 1 John 3: 1-3; Ephesians 4:14; Ephesians 6:1; 2 Peter 1:17; Mark 1:20 and Luke 9:59

Background

There is little explicit teaching on family life in the Bible, although we are given certain instructions such as honouring our parents; the covenant of marriage and the importance of faithfulness; the role of parents and grandparents (Paul). Given the context of the time when the Bible was written, the roles, responsibilities and nature of family life were taken as read, because of the centrality of the family/extended family at this time. As Christians, we need to think about family life in a wider context. As well as the family we are related to, we are also taught that, through Christ, we are adopted into God's family. This brings further roles and responsibilities. Infusing all aspects of both earthly and spiritual family life is love, as we see and experience in God.

God is relational – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of God (the Trinity) are complementary to create unity. There is perfect harmony in the complementary roles. In the Trinity, we see the model for perfect family.

In Genesis we read that God's desire was, and is, to create perfect community (relationship) with his creation, especially with humanity. God created human family – Adam and Eve – to enjoy perfect relationship with him. But perfect community was broken by human disobedience.

But God the Father remained true to His character and sent Jesus (the Divine son) to reveal the character and purposes of God. The defining characteristic is love. Jesus is obedient to the Father and through him the kingdom of God is brought to earth. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are offered the gift of restored relationship with God. We are offered the gift of adoption into the household of God, his family, as beloved children. Community with God is restored. Perfect community will be completed after Christ's return and judgement.

Like all parents, God the Father desires the best for his children. He invites his children, you and me, to grow and flourish in His love; to become all that He desires them to be – to become like His son, Jesus. This is His promise and He has given the Holy Spirit (see John 14:30-31) to enable every child to grow into the fullness of the Father's love for His glory (see Ephesians 4:14).

Introduction

Why do you think that God created the family structure?

What can be some of the joys and also challenges of family life over time?



Questions and Application

Read John 1: 1-13.

1. Children often resemble their parents, in both looks and personality. From this passage, what do we learn about how Jesus resembles God the Father?

2. Looking at verse 10, we realise that it is our normal condition not to accept Jesus. But God the Father has made this possible through the Son, who honours the Father.

Looking at verses 12-13, what do believers receive when they are adopted into God's family and what does this mean for our lives?

3. **Read 1 John 3: 1-7.** As we read these words, we sense John's amazement at this truth. Knowing this and realizing that one day, we will be like Christ (verse 2b) and know him for eternity, John encourages disciples to live today in the reality of this truth. This is what verse 7 means. We should want to take on our family resemblance now – to be like Jesus today. Why wait until heaven! Look at **Ephesians 4:14-15** as well.

- a) What do you think about what John & Paul have written?
- b) Remembering the presence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to grow into the fullness of God, how can we co-operate with the Holy Spirit to grow to increasing Christian maturity? Remembering that in heaven, this will be complete and "we will be like him."
- c) Do we want to grow up from being an infant in Christ's family? What holds us back from growing as a believer?

4. **Read Ephesians 6:1; 2 Peter 1:17.** There was a cost for Jesus in honouring the Father as he selflessly gave himself for us, his adopted children.

- a) What are some of the costs that we bear with our relatives?
- b) How can knowing we are part of God's family help us in our earthly family life?

5. **Read Mark 1:20 and Luke 9:59.** Disciples of Christ are invited/required to follow Christ – to put him first. We do this because we know that the defining characteristic of God is love. Our obedience to Christ and desire to grow into the fullness of faith can and does affect relationships within a family. In the time of Christ, when the family unit was so close and children assumed responsibilities for caring for loved ones, this teaching is all the more radical.

- a) In what way can Christians experience tensions in family life on account of faith?
- b) Share some personal experiences and how God has helped you when it may have been difficult to live out your faith within your family life.

Action

Family life can be one of the greatest blessings and also one of the greatest challenges we experience. We all have times of joy and sadness within our families, as we also see in Jesus' relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Spend some time praying for each other and your families, especially that you may know the supremacy of God's love in all situations. You may like to use Ephesians 3:14-20 to aid your prayers.



SESSION 2: A Time For Friends

**Read: 1 Samuel 18: 1-4; 19: 1-7; 20; John 15: 9-17;
(extra : Proverbs 12:26; 17:17; 18:24; 22:11; 27: 6,9)**

Background

Friendship is a vital component of life. Humanity was created by God as relational people. We flourish when we are in community (relationship). We enjoy community with family and friends.

Our society has created an understanding of friendship and sometimes appears to celebrate it more than family, often in a witty way. Think of tv series such as "Friends", "Will and Grace", "Seinfeld". What about friendship in the soaps (e.g. Coronation Street; East Enders). Is this what friendship is meant to look like?

Think of social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Friends Reunited). Is this what friendship is supposed to look like?

Think of friendships based mainly on common interests? Is this what friendship is meant to look like?

As we look at scripture to consider friendship, we realize that it has much to say to enable us to live today in fulfilling friendships. In the bible there are many examples of friendship to help us but we will concentrate on the friendship of David and Jonathan (son of King Saul – the first King of Israel).

Introduction

Think of who you consider to be your best friend(s)?
How would you describe your friendship?

Questions and Application

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4

1. What do we learn from this passage about Jonathan and David's friendship?
2. How is their friendship symbolized (v.4)? What do you think is the significance of Jonathan's action?
3. What is a covenant? Does this remind you of God's covenant with Abraham and then the New Covenant initiated by Christ?



Read 1 Samuel 19: 1-7 & 1 Samuel 20

4. True friendship can be costly and difficult at times. Why is this? What should we do when a friendship begins to take its toll on us or our families?

Read John 15: 9-17

Looking at verses 14-15, allow the significance of this amazing statement to sink in. We are not servants but friends of the King of Kings!

5. How does this make you feel and seek to live? Is there a danger that we think of God as God matey rather than God Almighty?
6. Thinking back to Jonathan and David and Jesus, how should the Biblical view of friendship impact on our friendships?
7. As Christians, how should we respond when friends do something we really don't agree with or find hard to accept? Is there ever a time when it's right to end a friendship?
8. Share some thoughts about how friendship has contributed to and enriched your life. How should we respond to those who may find it difficult to form solid friendships?

Action

Consider what you can do to develop your existing friendships and to make new ones.

As a group, take some time to pray for friendships, both within and outside the group. Pray for any areas of difficulty and that real friendship may be a mark of our church.



SESSION 3: A Time For God

Our lives seem busier than ever. Work, school, children, and countless other obligations take up a lot of precious time. A lot of people nowadays seem to keep up their relationships via Facebook or text messages. Unfortunately, the one relationship that can suffer the most for Christians from their busy life is a relationship with God. There are several easy things that followers of Christ can do to seek God, strengthen their relationship with Him, and find peace in the chaos

Read: Mark 1: 29-39, Luke 5: 12-16, 1 Thessalonians 5: 17-18

Background

We worship a God who created us to be in relationship with him. The key word there is 'relationship'. Any relationship needs working and friendships take time to build. God our Father wants us to spend time working on our relationship with him. In fact if we take our Christian faith seriously our relationship with God should be the most important relationship in our life. However, in reality it's probably the one that we put the least effort into.

Fellowship with God is a tremendous privilege. It's also meant to be an amazing adventure which every believer can experience. We must make time with the Lord our number one priority. There are lots of choices in life, and those choices will determine the priorities in our lives. So, we must be careful or the "busyness" and simple pleasures of life may crowd out our time with the Lord.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon, and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

(Mark 1:35-37, NIV)

People were always looking for Jesus. Many times He would take His disciples and try to get away to a lonely place; yet, the people would find Him, and they would crowd Him. Why? Because He ministered to them. He met their needs. He helped them. As a result, everyone wanted His time. But in spite of the demands on His time, Jesus made it a priority to get away and spend time with the Father.

It is my conviction and my experience that the most important meeting of the church is not on Sunday morning. The Sunday church service is a hugely important gathering, where we have opportunity to meet together and grow as the body of Christ, but I don't believe it's the most important encounter we can have as Christians. The most essential meeting is our own personal time with the Lord.

In Luke chapter five, Jesus healed a man of leprosy and then instructed him not to tell anyone. And of course, like so many others Jesus touched, he went out and started telling people.



It says in verse 15, "Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses." (NIV) It became even more difficult for Jesus to find a lonely, solitary place. The very next verse says, "**But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.**" (Luke 5:16, NIV)

Introduction

Why do you think God wants to be in relationship with us?

Think about your relationships, what do they involve? How do they impact you? What do they require from you?

Questions and Application

Read Mark 1: 29-39.

1. What does this passage tell us about Jesus' relationship with ordinary people and with those around him?
2. How might these relationships affect Jesus in his own personal life?
3. What does it tell us about Jesus' relationship with his Father?
4. What does this passage have to say to us today about our own relationships and how we deal with day to day events and pressures of life?

Read Luke 5: 12- 16. 'But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed'.

1. Discuss why this might be the case? Is there something in the text that gives us clues?
2. What coping strategies can we employ when the pressure of life takes it toll? Share/ discuss together
3. Do you find 'withdrawing to lonely places and praying' a help? Share any personal stories
4. How (what practical ways) can we develop this pattern in our life? Discuss/ share together
5. Is there any mileage in developing an accountability partner to help in this?

PTO....



Read 1 Thessalonians 5: 17-18

1. Praying, spending time with God is the example of life that Jesus gives us. Think about our family/friend relationships. In all our relationships it's crucial to spend time sharing, talking and building up our understanding of each other. When did you last spend time with God doing exactly that?
2. What do you think is 'God's will for you in Christ'?
3. As a housegroup how could you develop your groups prayer life? Share/Discuss how you feel about this – share any stories of answered prayer/ how can we move forward in prayer together.

Action:

Are you able to make a conscious effort to develop your personal prayer life? Are you able to follow the example of Jesus and make time for God?

As a group talk though practical ways in which you can help each other in this. Discuss daily bible notes, daily prayer patterns etc.

Conclude by praying together.



SESSION 3: A Time For....God

Read: Mark 1: 29-39

Background

Introduction

Themes and Application

Action