

Tuesday 23rd June 09

God is a “Family Man”

“God sets the lonely in families...”

As we know, there are many Names by which we know God: know His character, and know His attributes: Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Jireh, El-Shaddai etc, but there is none more personal than the family-name “ABBA” who He declares He is to us:

Passages for Meditation:

Deuteronomy 1:31: *“...and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”*

Psalm 68:5: *“A Father to the fatherless ... is God...”*

Romans 8:15: *“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ”*

Galatians 4:6: *“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” ”*

Reflection:

As children we look a lot to our parents daily for everything; then when we become adults, we put “childish ways behind us” and learn to fend for ourselves – or to stand on our own two feet. Some adults feel they need to stray away from the family home as they create their new home, but at any age and any stage - there is nothing greater than to hear a family laughing together, or sharing a moment which each member can reflect back on in times of difficulty.

I used to have a young Polish family living next door to me, and every Saturday morning I would be woken by the beautiful sound of the young boy and his parents laughing together, as they shared breakfast together, after a tough week at school and work.

And recently I met up with my family to share a meal – 4 generations of us... as I was growing up I would never have imagined enjoying spending such humorous and enjoyable times with my family!

It is in the family home we can relax and let go of all the pressures, frustrations, difficulties, issues, mask-building, insecurities, pressure and heart-ache. It is in the family home we can take off our “professional-holding-it-all-together” mask and put on our oldest tracky bottoms, baggiest sweater, comfy worn-out slippers and veg out in front of the TV with a warm mug of cocoa and hot apple pie & custard. It is in the family home we can off-load our heart and mind safely without fear that the deepest details of our hearts will be spread around the world like a computer virus. It is in the family home we don’t have to pretend or to strive for acceptance – we are just accepted.

We were never called to live this life alone! God Himself said “it is not good for man to be alone”. I know many of us relate this primarily to the Husband and wife relationship, but this “thought” of God goes deeper than just a husband and wife relationship. Before God created Eve, He was with Adam – He was Adam’s Family. I can imagine them often having a joke together like siblings. I imagine there would have been times of direction, discipline, direction and advice as from a Father. I can almost hear them having a moment of thought provoking conversation as you would with a close Cousin, or a catch-up as with a distant uncle.

God is a family man. He places us in families when we are born, though because of the sin of man and the fall of mankind – these families are not always easy to live amongst... nor are they always there as they should be for us.

He places us in a family when we are born again. Not that we would be as families are today – arguing, squabbling, competing, falling out – but that we would understand what it means to be a part of God’s Family – to really share together, creating moments of laughter, encouragement and hope.

In the early church, when they broke of bread together, it was an intimate act of unity and love which

demonstrated to the world what it meant to be placed in God's Family. It was this unity and love amongst the believers which Jesus prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He was betrayed. It is this Unity and love which draws people into the family of God. It is this Unity and Love which the enemy hates the most and will do all he can to steal, kill and destroy – both within the spiritual family – and within the natural family.

The sad reality is that the world has many destroyed families: many widows and orphans. There are many children who are fatherless, or whose fathers are so bad they wish they were fatherless. There are violent arguments, fierce rivalry and sibling jealousy... Please understand friends – This is not God's design. This is the family under attack, this is the family which needs to be protected and cherished – as a parent with a child. The Family is a precious commodity – offering life-giving hope, acceptance, love and togetherness. That is why God – the Family man – chose to set the lonely in families.

We can be surrounded by a multitude of friends, and yet feel lonely – but God sets the lonely in families. There are situations we all face on a daily basis which can cause us to feel isolated and alone – but rest assured, God places the lonely in families. There are times when we feel as though no-one can possibly understand what we are going through and so we stay silent and alone – but the promise and the hope for you is – God sets the lonely in families.

There is a bond within a family that goes beyond any other bond - that would cause us to do more for our loved one than we would for anyone else. A bond which affects us when someone in our family encounters a difficulty; when one in our family rejoices, we rejoice with them.

There is a bond between those who have received the Spirit of sonship through Christ that is created spiritually. We share the same Father – we share the same Spirit. We serve One Lord, One God through One Body.

Prayer points:

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, as we pray for unity, as we pray for one another, let's pray that our family will withstand the attack of the One who seeks to steal, kill and destroy our family. Let's pray that we have an opportunity we can create moments of laughter and joy which we can each hold on to and remember through the tough times we all inevitably face.

Steph