

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

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This Week's Question:

Who had a throne with lion statues beside it?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Moses - Exodus 17:8-12

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The Church as the Family of God

Tim Stevens

A newborn Christian made the following statement after meeting a group of Christians for the first time who were visiting our worship services: "I'm amazed at the number of relatives I keep meeting that I've never met before!" No doubt, he saw the church of Christ as the family of Christ.

"Family" is a term that most people can relate to and understand. Why? Because most people are related or connected to someone in some way. It is within a "family" that we know of relationships, ties, warmth, closeness and security. Our dictionaries define "family" as a group of persons forming a household. We find the Bible comparing the "church" to a family and even a household. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15). "The whole family" here refers "to all those who are spiritually related to God the Father. He being the Author of their spiritual relationship to Him as His children, they being united to one another in 'family' fellowship" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). Terms like brethren, children, heavenly Father, sons and daughters indicates that the relationship that Christians have with one another is a special relationship! After all, we are related to one another as a result of our obedience to Jesus Christ. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians

3:26–27). Yes, the family of God is a special relationship, but sadly, it is often taken for granted by many of us older family members.

Someone once gave me some ideas for a sermon outline on this very topic, some that are presented in this article. For example, take each letter of the word “F-A-M-I-L-Y”, and notice some ways in which Christians should conduct themselves toward their heavenly Father and brethren within the family of God:

F—FAITHFUL—Faithfulness is encouraged throughout the Bible in these expressions: Jesus spoke, “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22); Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Every time Jesus speaks of “him who overcomes” in the seven letters to the churches of Asia, He is speaking of faithfulness.

A—ACTIVE—“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Look at the apostles and disciples in the first century. They were workers! They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Dorcas comes to mind as one who was active. She was “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36). James wrote, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

M—MERCIFUL—Merciful is defined as “kindness, or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them” (Thayer). It involves both an attitude of compassion and action. The good Samaritan showed mercy. “And when he saw him, he had compassion” (Luke 10:33). Showing mercy involves a) caring for the spiritual needs of others (Galatians 6:1); b) sharing sorrow (Galatians 6:2); c) caring for the physical needs of others (Galatians 6:10); d) granting forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32); e) refraining from cruelty by our words and harsh judgments (Galatians 5:13–15). Let us keep in mind, that God will grant no mercy to those who show no mercy. “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

I—INFLUENTIAL—There is no such thing as a person without influence. You bring an influence to whatever you participate in. Paul wrote, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8) and, “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15; see also Matthew 5:16). A congregation of God’s family are privileged to have newborn Christians. These are babes in Christ who are weak and need to grow spiritually. Older brothers and sisters have a responsibility toward them as new members in the family of God (Matthew 18:6–7).

L—LOVING—Jesus said, “A new-commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). A congregation of the Lord should consist of members knit together in the common bond of love and truth, working in harmony and striving together to build up the cause of Christ. Paul also wrote, “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Colossians 2:2). Someone once said in regards to this, “In order for the ‘knit together’ atmosphere to prevail, personal preferences and matters of opinion must be kept to ourselves. Where opinionism, radicalism and hobbyism reign, chaos, confusion, strife and contention results.” The apostle Paul commended the brethren at Thessalonica for the love they had for their brethren, but went on to say, “But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:9–10).

Y—“YEAR IN AND YEAR OUT”—On a day to day basis, we are a family! Our goal, and desire is to go to heaven. If we have difficulty learning to get along here on this earth, how do we think we will ever make it to heaven? From the song, “God’s Family” there’s a phrase which says, “Now we’re part of the fam’ly that’s on its way home.” Yes, there is a home waiting at the end of this life for the family of God, but only if we have been faithful, active, merciful, influential for good and loving—year in and year out!