

The Family of God

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles. We're going to read from two passages this morning. The first is from John chapter 20. We're going to begin reading in verse 10 and read through verse 18.

John chapter 20 verse 10. After Jesus' death and the resurrection. Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, Woman, why are you crying? They have taken my Lord away, she said, and I don't know where they have put him. At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

Woman, he said, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she said, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.

[1 : 17] Jesus said to her, Mary. And she turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said, do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news.

I have seen the Lord. And she told them that he had said these things to her. Then turn to 1 John. 1 John chapter 4.

We're going to begin reading at verse 7 and read through the end of the chapter. Dear friends, let us love one another.

For love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

[2 : 20] This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him. This is love.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit. And we have seen and testified that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence in the day of judgment.

[3 : 30] Because in this world, we are like him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment.

The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar.

For everyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command. Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Well, it's been about a month now that we've been studying the identity that Christians have as children of the living God.

And we've been looking at the many privileges that are ours to be such. We have the father's listening ear. We have his watchful eye.

[4 : 29] We have his protecting and providing hands. We have his encouraging words. We have even his loving discipline. And his glorious inheritance.

Yes, we get all this in heaven too, as someone said. Now this morning we consider that having God as our father is to have his entire family as well.

To belong to the whole family of God is part of the riches and privileges of every child of God. So think about, we're thinking about the family of God this morning. First of all, there's our great father. The head of the family. The one from whom all families on earth take their name as father. And if it was just my father and me, well, it would be an amazing thing. Behold, what kind of love is this that the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

[5 : 38] And that's what we are. But there's much more to the family than just father and me. There's the father's family. Well, who else is in this family?

Secondly, we have our elder brother Jesus. He's in this family. Now follow me. If the heavenly father is Jesus' father and he's also our father, then what would that make us in Jesus?

Well, it would make us brothers, wouldn't it? Yes. And that is what we are. We are brothers. We have the same father. And so Jesus is our brother.

That's exactly what he said to Mary Magdalene when he met her after rising from the dead. The passage that was read. Don't hold on to me. I've not yet returned to the father.

Go instead to my brothers and tell them I am returning to my father and your father. To my God and your God.

[6 : 48] Since my father is your father, go tell my brothers. You're my brothers, you see. Now when you have a famous brother, and I had four of them, you're proud to let it be known that they're your brother.

When somebody's singing their praises, you're glad to be able to say, yeah, that's my brother. That's my brother. What then is the honor that we have to have the Lord Jesus Christ as our brother?

What a brother he is for us. A brother is born for adversity, the Bible says. Oh, you talk about adversity. I had sinned. And every one of my sins would have sunk me in an eternal hell before this holy God against whom I had sinned.

I was in deep. And Father sent his son to pay the debt for me. And I'm free. His son, Jesus, my elder brother, took the rap.

Bailed me out. Forgave me. Justified me. Satisfied the father's wrath for me. What a brother. What adversity.

[8 : 12] He was born for that, wasn't he? A brother who's there for you when you need him. Who sticks up for you. Who would give you the shirt off of his back. Look, that's the best of a brother.

And Jesus is the perfect elder brother. The best of all that a good brother is. But we, on the other hand, we've proven to be less than a faithful brother to him.

Sometimes more of an embarrassment to him. And yet, lo and behold, he says in Hebrews 2.15 that he's not ashamed to call us brothers. If that doesn't amaze you, then look in the mirror again and see just who you are, that he's calling a brother.

Think of, think what a brother Peter had been to him just hours before this event with, three days before, I should say, this event with Mary Magdalene.

If ever Jesus could have used a dear brother, a faithful brother, it was then. When the whole world seemed to combine in condemning him and mocking him and accusing him.

[9 : 25] Oh, for a brother then to clearly just come to your side and to stand up with you and to take the heat for you. Remain loyal and devoted then.

Instead, Peter denied three times that he even knew him. You were with him? Don't know the man. How's that for a brother? Don't know him.

Don't know him. And all his disciples forsook him and fled for their lives. They ditched him in his time of need. And yet, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Mary, go tell my brothers.

What good news that must have been to their ears. Not only to hear that Jesus was alive, but that he still regarded them as brothers. Their relationship as brother to brother had not been changed. Here's a true brother. And it's one thing for us to call Jesus brother. That's to our honor. But it's a far greater honor for him to call us brother.

[10 : 33] Even on our bad days, to call us his brother. He has no bad days. He's the perfect brother. Let's not be ashamed of him.

You remember one day Jesus was busy teaching the crowd. And so busy he wasn't stopping to eat. And his mother and brothers thought, oh my, we better go lay hands on him. He needs help down

there.

And so they showed up. And the crowd was so great they couldn't get to him. So someone came to Jesus and said, your mother and brothers are here and they want to see you.

And pointing to his disciples, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

Jesus was not denying his earthly family with Mary and his other brothers. But he was taking the opportunity to teach of an even more important family. The family that has God as its father.

[11 : 45] And Jesus as the elder brother. Now who's in this family? How do you know them? Well, they all do the will of the father.

They listen to him. They have their ears tuned to this frequency of father's voice.

That's that's how we get our heart and our ears tuned in the new birth. When we're born again into the family of God, our ears are tuned to the frequency of father's voice.

We listen and we put into practice what father says. That's how you know who are these brothers of Jesus. That voice father's voice carries the most weight.

It trumps every other voice that comes calling to us, especially our own voice. His children reverence his word. They're said to tremble at his word.

[12 : 41] So great is their fear of of ever displeasing their loving father in heaven. Well, this is the family of God. Amazing family.

God is our father. Jesus is our elder brother. The firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8, 29 says the firstborn that position, that highest position of honor in all the family.

That belongs to Jesus, the eternal son of God. And that's why we refer to him as our elder brother. He who is before and above all others.

But then there's more to the father's family than the father and the elder brother. We just read he's the firstborn among many brothers.

Many brothers. So this is a reference to all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Okay. This is a big family.

[13 : 46] Ben. Is David your father? Chris, is David your father? Nate, is David your father?

Then what does that make you boys to each other? More than pals, right? It makes you brothers. Brothers. Brothers. And I can say to whoever you are.

If God is my father. And God is your father. Then we are brothers. We are brothers and sisters in this big family of God.

And that's not a small thing in the New Testament. You can't read far before you bump into this word. Brothers. Dear brothers.

Those are not throwaway words. They're conveyors of an important truth. Of our identity. That if I am a child of God. My identity is also that I am your brother.

[14 : 49] Brother. And that carries huge implications. As the whole New Testament unfolds. By the way, it includes you sisters as well. You sisters.

The old English word brethren. Includes cistern too. And so we're all involved in that word brother. The Greek word for brother is adelphos.

It's a compound word of two words. Ah meaning from. Delphos meaning womb. And so it carries brother means one from the same womb.

And even so, when we're born again. We're born of God. We're born into this big family of God. We've come through the same womb of the Holy Spirit's new birth.

We become part of the household of faith. The family of believers as they're called. Or God's household. The brotherhood. And have you noticed you're not an only son in this family?

[15 : 55] You might be the only son or the only child in your family. But not in this family. There's no only sons or only daughters. God has many children.

And they are all your brothers and sisters. If you are in Christ. And that relationship is a game changer in how you treat them.

You treat them differently because they're brothers. They're sisters. We're family. We not only belong to the heavenly father and to the elder brother.

We belong to one another. And so we have this common bond that unites us together. And we have a sense of belonging.

And you know what I'm talking about. Maybe some of us went away to conferences in the past.

Maybe you've been overseas. Maybe it's somebody at work. Somebody you've never met before.

[16:49] Maybe a visitor who comes here. Wherever you meet them. And within 15, 20 minutes. Sometimes even. You say this is a brother in Christ.

This is a true sister. You have that sense that we're one. We belong together. It's that special bond that belongs to the children of God.

We have the same father. The same elder brother. The same regenerating and indwelling spirit.

The same new nature. With the same loves. The same hatreds.

The same purposes. The same priorities. The same Bible. The same worldview. The same moral values. The same joys and sorrows. The same living hope.

The same destiny. The same inheritance. And you sense that. Oneness. That special bond. That belongs to the family of God.

[17:48] So family is where we belong. Isn't it? It's where we're accepted. We're loved as we are. We. We're cared for. And God created us with desires.

To belong. And so he made us social creatures. That's the. That's what gives us these. This desire to belong. In our earthly family. Is one.

Of those ways. That those desires are fulfilled. We have. Of earthly families. And that desire to belong. Is fulfilled.

Wonderful gift of God. But sin has ruined. And wrecked many. A family. And even where grace. Has preserved our families. And given us a good. Earthly family. Still.

It's a dim shadow. Of this family. In which the heavenly father. Is father. And Jesus. Is the elder brother. And all the Christians. Who've received Jesus Christ.

[18:46] And therefore. Are given the right. To become. Become the children of God. They're your brothers and sisters. That's a family. It is even.

More amazing. Than the best of earthly families. Now some of you have. Unbelieving families. And you have more in common. With. Brothers and sisters here. Than you do with.

Your own. Blood brothers. And sisters. It's that special bond. Of brotherhood. You have so much in common. With. Those that you're not. Physically related to.

But you are spiritually. Related in Christ. So God's family. Is a big family. And it's got some big. Differences too. Differences that.

That create. Problems in the world. Differences that divide. People in this world. But what unites us. In the family of God. Is far greater. Than anything.

[19:43] In which we differ. We bump into these. Differences. Even in our New Testaments. We read about the differences. Of Gentile and Jew. And the problems.

That caused. Male and female. And slave and free. And rich and poor. And young and old. We have different. Ethnicities today. We have different. Education.

Different backgrounds. And ideas. And understandings. And. Many other differences. And. Those differences. Are found.

Within this big family. Of God. And so we ask. Well. If that's what divides. The people of the world. How can these differences. Ever.

Survive. In the family. Of God. Well. It's due to the father. The wonderful father. That he is. And how he brings about. Through his son.

[20:37] And spirit. This. This unity. What a father. To pull that off. With. With such great diversity. That there is. And Jesus reminds us. That that's what we're after. In the families.

That others would see. Our good deeds. And would see. Our love for one another. And would praise. Our father. Who is in heaven. I think that's why.

Something is just. Inherently wrong. When churches. Exist. Just to reach. One segment. Of society. So we're going to reach.

The 20s. And the 30 somethings. Middle. Middle upper class. Everything. Is to attract them.

You miss something. Of the glory. Of the gospel. You miss something. Of the glory. Of our heavenly father. And of his work. Through his son. And his spirit. He's able.

[21:36] To bring together. People of different. Ethnicities. And ages. And backgrounds. And to make them one. And that's to his glory. And praise.

He's able to bring together. Ephesians 2 says. The great differences. Between Jew. And Gentile. Through the blood. Of Christ's cross. He reconciled Jews.

To God the father. And he reconciled Gentiles. To God the father. And in that work. Of reconciling us. To God. The father. He reconciled us.

To one another. And you miss that. If all you're reaching. Is people. Who are like you. People who are all the same. No. A church. Is to reflect. The diversity.

In which we live. It's interesting. As we're studying Titus. And Sunday evenings. They didn't. Target. A certain age group. And we're just going to be the church. For the 20 somethings.

[22 : 31] We're just coming through chapter 2. And there's instructions. For the older men. And the older women. And the younger women. And the young men. And they don't have a church.

For each one of them. They're. They're. They're working together. The older women are. Teaching the younger women. And so on. So. Diversity. But unified by. The one father.

And the work of our elder brother. And the glorious spirit of God. That's the family. That we belong to. The believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So. Every good family has some good. Family rules. And so does our father in heaven. And when we keep them. We bring praise. To.

Our father in heaven. And that becomes the highest motive. For. For obeying. Our father's. Rules. That he might.

[23 : 26] Receive pleasure. And glory. Honor. By having children. Who obey his rules. Not just to avoid his. Discipline.

But. To bring praise to him. And pleasure. To him. So your identity. As a child of God. Affects the way you. You obey.

The. The family rules. There's one great rule. That governs the father's family. And it's. Love one another. Another. It's an old command.

And yet it's a new command. John says. And all the other rules. In the family. Are explanations. Telling us. How to do that. How to love.

One another. John is called. The apostle of love. Because he speaks. So often of love. Talks so often. Of what the Lord Jesus. Said about love. You can't help.

[24 : 20] But see his emphasis. Upon this family rule. When you read. His first letter. Of the first epistle. Of John. We read a portion. From it. This morning. But. Loving your brothers.

Is a note. That he bangs. Over and over. In those five short chapters. Doesn't say anything. In chapter one. So much. About it. But chapter two. He starts. And he mentions.

Talks about. Loving your brother. Chapter three. Huge section. On. Loving. Your brother. In fact. He. He says.

It's so central. That it becomes. One of the key tests. By which to know. Who's in the family. First John three. Ten. This is how we know. Who the children of God are. And who the children of the devil are.

Anyone who does not do. What is right. Is not a child of God. Nor is anyone. Who does not love. His brother. That's one of the key marks. Of all. The brothers. In the father's family.

[25 : 18] They love one another. Chapter three. In verse 14. We know. We've passed. From death to life. Because we love our brothers. Chapter four. In verse 21. If anyone says.

I love God. Yet hates his brother. He's a liar. For anyone. Who does not love his brother. Whom he's seen. Cannot love God. Whom he's not seen. And he has given us. This command. Whoever loves God.

Must also love his brother. Do you know. It's impossible. For you to love God. Without loving. All his brothers.

Or your brothers. His children. It is impossible. Because love for God. Includes love for your brothers. And that means.

That you must love them. For God's sake. For father's sake. If for no other reason. At all. Just because. They're father's children.

[26 : 17] And you are too. And if that's not enough. To move you to love them. Then it proves. You're no child of God. At all. Because.

It's chapter 5. And verse 1. Says. Everyone who loves. The father. Loves his child. As well. Well. The importance. That the father.

Places then. On loving our brothers. Cannot be missed. It dominates. This letter. And it's found throughout. The letters of Paul. And Peter. And so on.

As well as our Lord's teaching. It proves. Who the real children. Of God are. They all. They love all. In the family of God. Now.

I wonder. If you can see something. Of the father's heart. In this. One great command. For the family. Fathers. I would hope. That you can see it.

[27 : 13] Is this not your heart. For your children. Don't you want to see them. Loving each other. Does it not bother you. When you see. Your children. Clanging with each other.

And having clashes. With each other. Let's say. You have a new daughter. In the family. Whether by adoption. Or by birth. What do you want? Well. You want the other children.

To accept her. And to love her. And to get on well with her. And you want her. To grow. To love. And accept. Her brothers and sisters. As well. And when they don't love one another.

It hurts. It cuts you to the heart. Things are not right. Well. Our heavenly father. Has revealed his heart. He's. He's born soul. To us.

In that great commandment. It's his pleasure. To see his children. Loving each other. It's his great. Displeasure.

[28 : 10] To see them not loving. One another. And I think that should go a long way. Just toward burying hatchets.

Toward forgiving old offenses. Toward. Overlooking. New offenses. Settling ugly disputes. Seeking. Peace. And reconciliation. To realize.

Right at the top. This is what the father wants. For all of us. His children. Now this love commanded. To the family of God.

It's not just any love. It's a certain kind of love. Did you. Did you see that. It's. Well. We haven't. Maybe read any verses about that yet. We'll do that now.

It's a certain kind of love. That we have for each other. As children of God. It's. It's called brotherly love. And. And it's a word you know. You're all Greek scholars here. Because it's Philadelphia.

[29 : 07] Philadelphia. The love. Of brother. The love of brothers. And so we have. The city of brotherly love.

I don't know. How much love. That brotherly love. There is in Philadelphia. I read that it's. It's one of the biggest. Top of the line. For big cities. Murders. In big cities.

In our country. But that's the word. Philadelphia. That's the kind. The special kind. Of love. That God wants. In his family.

Brotherly love. Brotherly love. Romans 12. 10. Be devoted to one another. In brotherly love. We have the saying.

Don't we. Blood runs. Thicker. Than water. It speaks of a special. Devotion. That's what we mean by it. A special. Devotion. Among blood. Brothers. It's. It's a.

[30 : 02] It's a special. Kind of love. It's a. It's a fervent. Devotion. And it's something. We're to always be making. Every effort. To add.

To. Our faith. Goodness. Knowledge. Self-control. Perseverance. Godliness. And to godliness. Philadelphia. Always. Wanting more. Philadelphia.

Brotherly love. So keep on loving each other. As brothers. Hebrews. Thirteen. One. So our identity. Then. As children of God.

Does something. To our love. For one another. It raises it. To brotherly love. Brotherly love. So. I want to look at.

First. Peter. Three. Eight. Notice. Out of these. Five. Virtues. Right at the center. Is Philadelphia. Finally. All of you. Speaking to. The family.

[30 : 56] Of God. Live in harmony. With one another. Be sympathetic. Love. As brothers. Be compassionate. And humble.

And right in the middle. Of that verse. First. Peter. Three. Eight. We have this. Love. As brothers. Love. Yes. Love. One another.

But this special love. Love. As brothers. Now. I think that the. Other virtues. That are clustered. With it. Give us a sense. Of what brotherly love.

Looks like. Live in harmony. With one another. You say. Well. I had a brother. And we didn't live in harmony. With one another. I'm talking about.

What a good brotherly relationship. Looks like. The best of human. Brotherly relationships. Live in harmony. With one another. Notes.

[31 : 49] That harmonize. Well. With each other. Go together. They're not a jarring. Sound. They're rather. A pleasant sound. And Psalm 133. One says. How good.

And how pleasant. It is. When brothers. Dwell together. In unity. When brothers. Get on. Oh. It's pleasant. And that's. Not only true. To those. Here.

That see it. But it's true. When the father. Looks down. And sees his children. It's good. It's pleasant. To him. It pleases him. So. There's to be.

No sibling rivalries. In the family of God. No cliques. But equal concern. For each other. No favoritism. As James says. In chapter two.

It's. It's. It's. What you parents want. You want harmony. In your home. You don't want your kids. Fighting each other. Neither does God. Live in harmony. Brotherly love is.

[32 : 45] Also. Sympathetic. Sympathetic. Brotherly love. Rejoices. With those. That rejoice. And they weep. With those. Who weep. You are so wrapped up. In the interest.

Of your brother. That you can't help. Feeling. What he's feeling. So if he's rejoicing. You're happy. And if he's weeping. You're sad. I don't know.

Which is easier. And which is harder. For you. To rejoice. With others. Who are succeeding. In the family of God. Or. Or. Or to weep. With those. Who are suffering. But. It's brotherly love.

That rises. To that occasion. And to that level. Brotherly love. Is also. Compassionate. This is. What is often said.

Of Jesus. In the gospels. That seeing the crowds. They were like sheep. Without a shepherd. Harassed. Beaten up. By the world. And no shepherd.

[33 : 39] And Jesus. Was moved. With compassion. He. He felt. With them. What it must be like. To be in their condition. And so he. He did something.

Compassion. Moves. The person. To meet the need. And that's what Jesus. Did. Over and over. That's brotherly love.

To relieve the need. As we see it. To help carry the burden. Galatians 6.10. Says. Therefore. As we have opportunity. Let us do good. To all people. Especially. To those.

Who belong. To the family. Of believers. Brotherly love. Is active. Compassion. Doing good. Meeting the need. Of our brothers. And sisters.

In need. And then. The last word. In the. First Peter. Three. Eight. Brotherly love. Is humble. In humility. Consider one another.

[34 : 35] Better than yourselves. Prefer one another. In love. Be. Be more concerned. Of. Of hearing. What they think.

Rather than. Getting out. What you think. And. It's that humility. That makes us. The servant. Of all. You know. Why there's no room. For pride. Or prejudice.

In the family. Of God. It's. Because. All of us. Were children. Of the devil. At one time. And none of us. Deserve. To be children. Of God.

So there's no. Looking down. The nose. At anyone. In the family. It doesn't matter. What their past. Or present is. No looking. Down the nose. Toward any. In the family.

Of God. The fact. That we've been. Adopted. Into the family. Says nothing. About. Our worthiness. And says everything.

[35 : 27] About God's grace. It's all of grace. That we were adopted. To the praise. Of his. Glorious. Grace. So when grace.

Reigns. In the family. Of God. Humility results. That's another mark. Of brotherly love. And we're just. Getting started. We think of all the one and others. That are commanded. To brothers. To the brethren. In the church. I think there's something like. 20 to 30 of them. In the New Testament. Brotherly love forgives one another.

It overlooks faults. It bears with brothers and sisters. It puts up with. Little offenses. It doesn't. It's not touchy. It's. It doesn't slander one another.

It returns good for evil. It encourages. And builds others up. It seeks to restore. The fallen brother. It. It. It greets one another. There's no standoffishness. In.

[36 : 23] In God's family allowed. Remember. They were to greet one another. With a holy kiss. It was. A warm greeting. We're. To say hello. To each other. We're to speak to each other.

Not. Not standoffishness. We're to pray for one another. We're. Brotherly love is kind. To one another. Brotherly love. Limits personal freedoms.

Lest we would. Cause a brother. To stumble. Accept one another then. Just as Christ accepted you. In order to bring praise to God. Can we even imagine.

Rejecting someone. That Christ has. Accepted. If Christ has accepted him. Will we reject him? Well. He's. He's. He's not one of us. And he's not like us.

And he's got this different. Belief. And. Well. Unless it's the. Foundation of the gospel. He could still be our brother. Accept one another then.

[37 : 21] Just as Christ. Accepted you. Well. Brotherly love. Sacrifices. For each other. This is how we even know what love is.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives. For who? For our brothers. If anyone has material possessions. And sees his brother in need. But has no pity. No compassion on him. How can the love of God be in him? So dear brothers. Dear children. Let us not love with words and tongue.

But with actions. And in truth. If you have any questions about. What brotherly love looks like. Look at your elder brother. And the way he loves you. That's the way you're to be.

To your brothers. Brothers and sisters. And when you treat your brothers. In all these ways. You love the brethren. With this brotherly love. Remember what Jesus says.

[38 : 17] What you did for the least. Of these brothers of mine. You have done unto me. You may not even know. That anybody else knew about it.

But. What you did to the least brother. Jesus will one day reward. Because you did it to me. He says. When you did it to him. When you did it to her.

And praise comes to our father in heaven. For having such a family of devoted. Children. To one another. In fervent love. So. I trust you're beginning to see. How your identity.

As children of God. Is to make a huge difference. In how you relate. To other Christians. As brothers. As sisters. With brotherly love. Now just.

A few applications. And we're done. The first. Is just to. To read. First. Thessalonians 4. 9. And 10. Now about. Brotherly love. About Philadelphia.

[39 : 13] We do not need to write to you. For you yourselves. Have been taught by God. To love each other. And in fact. You do love. All the brothers. Throughout Macedonia.

Not just in your local church. At Thessalonica. But all the brothers. Throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you. Brothers. To do so. More.

And more. This is something. That the heavenly father. Teaches all his children. Don't need to write to you. About. Brotherly love. Because. You've all been taught.

By God. To love. God is love. And all of his children. Are taught by him. To love. And. Jesus says. They shall all be taught. By God. And. This is one of the chief. Lessons of the father. He teaches his children. To love. Now. Some love more than. Others. And sometimes. We need a letter.

[40 : 08] And more than a letter. From our heavenly father. But I want to say. He's been teaching you. To love. I've been on the receiving end. Of brotherly love.

For the last two years. I've been. In affliction. And you. Have been brothers. Born for affliction. To me. And. I want you to know.

It's sweet to experience. It's sweet to experience. And it. It makes me. Look at affliction. In a different way. And that the afflicted.

In a different way. But it's not only sweet. To experience. It's also sweet. To observe. As one of your pastors. To see you. Treating each other.

As brothers. And sisters. To see you. Hanging around. After the services. Almost as if you enjoy. Being together. And.

[41 : 03] Getting together. During the week. And finding you. Praying for one another. Learning from you. About somebody else's need. Over here. I didn't know about that. But you did.

You see. You. You're involved. In each other's life. You're. You're bearing each other's burdens. You're. You're taking them. To the heavenly father. And I say. As a pastor. That if.

If it's sweet. To observe. As one of your pastors. What must it be. To the father in heaven. To see his children. Loving his brothers. What a. What a. Pleasant thing. It is to the father.

How it pleases him. And so the holy. Father. The heavenly father. Has taught you. To love his brothers. He's given you. Hearts of sincere love. And interest in each other.

And I can only urge you. Brothers. To do so. More. And more. We're never done growing. In this. Philadelphia. Find new expressions.

[41 : 55] Of brotherly love. Keep your eyes open. For some kind of need. And fill the gap. Opportunities. To carry a burden. Ask father.

He will help you. He will show you. New expressions. Of brotherly love. But then. Find new brothers. And sisters. To love on. Even some. That are different. From you. Maybe. Take the challenge. In the next month. To be found. After a service. Talking with someone. That's at the other end. Of the age spectrum. The older. Speaking with the younger. Younger. Seeking out the older. It's a blessed thing. To hear. How. Our young people. Sat down. With the older. Widows. And had a meal. And served them. And talked with each other.

If you've not done that. I put the challenge. To you. A new. Expression. Of. Love. To your brothers. [42 : 51] And sisters. Especially. Where there's. The difference. Of ages. Have someone. Over for a meal. That you've never. Had over before. New expressions.

New. People. To show brotherly. Love to. Is there a black. Brother at work. You could fellowship. With. A Hispanic sister.

Say. Oh John. They have different doctrines. Do they love. Jesus Christ. And is he. Their only hope. Of heaven. You're going to spend.

Eternity. With them. Get to know them. Rejoice together. In what you do. Have in common. The heavenly father.

The elder brother. The indwelling spirit. Find some new. Expressions. Of brotherly love. Find some new. Brothers and sisters. To love on. So.

[43 : 46] Do so. More and more. That's the first application. The second. Is just to. Appreciate God's design. God. Is so designed. Things. That when a new life. I'm talking about. A physical baby.

Comes into the world. They find themselves. In a family unit. Where they belong. And where they. Grow up. And are nurtured. And live.

And it's an established fact. Statistically. That children do better in life. When they have a healthy family life. Life. Um. Unhealthy.

Or absent. Family life. Is often found. Leading to trouble. And problems. Later on. So family is good for us.

By God's design. That's all I'm wanting to say. Family is good for us. By God's design. And in a similar way. God means for his spiritual children. To belong.

[44 : 44] To a spiritual. Church. Family. To brothers and sisters. In a church family. He doesn't leave the baby. That's born. To fend for itself.

And neither does he leave baby Christians. Apart from. Church families. Rather one of the first things. That. That he says to them. Is repent.

And be baptized. Baptized. And they are to be baptized. Into the local church. The local family. Of God's people. Where they can. Grow. Where they can.

Rub shoulders. With each other. Where they can. Be. Maturing. Into the likeness. Of Jesus Christ. Where we will care.

For one another. And look out. For one another. And live the shared life. Together. As children. Of the same father. Where we enjoy. The gift of belonging. Mutual encouragement.

[45 : 41] Even correction. That's the context. In which God's children. Thrive. And that. By his design. And the New Testament. Makes plain. That according to God's design.

The Christian life. Is. A family life. The Christian life. Is. A family life. It's relating. To one another. As brothers. And sisters. You can't miss it.

In the epistles. You read. In Ephesians. The first three chapters. The doctrine. Of. Of the gospel. And. And then you come. To chapter four.

And you start to see. All the application. Of it. And it's. It's. Starts with the church. The church. Your brothers and sisters. In the family of God. That's. That's where we grow. That's.

That's where it happens. And you see that pattern. In Paul's epistles. In other words. Sanctification. Is a family project. We grow in grace.

[46 : 35] As we rub shoulders. And love. On each other. In the family. So isolation. Is not an option. For God's children. When. When the family meets.

Be there. Be there. Father intends. To. To grow us up. Into Christ. Like. He intends. For our getting together. To minister. To our hearts.

And so his plan. His design. Is that we not forsake. The assembling. The gathering of ourselves. Together. As some are in the habit. Of doing. But that we rather. Encourage each other.

Spur one another. On. To love. And good deeds. That's. That's why he wants us. Together. He wants us to. To not only. Seek to grow in grace. By our personal. Bible reading. At home. He wants there. To be times. When we gather together. That together. We might worship God. Together. Together. We might sing his praise. Together.

[47 : 27] We might. Listen to father. And learn from father. Together. We might take the Lord's supper. Together. We might remember. How it is.

That we got into this family. It costs. Plenty. As we remember. In the Lord's supper. He wants us. Praying together. Growing together.

Getting to know one another. Being together. Treasure those family times. Guard them. Prioritize them. It's God's design. For each one of his children.

And then thirdly. Family problems will arise. If. None of your brothers or sisters. Are perfected yet. If you haven't seen that. Hang around a little longer.

You'll learn that. But neither are you. Perfected. As a brother. As a sister. We all fight our own indwelling sin.

[48 : 24] We fight our own commitment to self. That makes us less than loving at times. And far less lovable. So when tensions arise.

Between your brothers and sisters. Just remember. You've come from the same womb. The same new birth of the spirit. The same father.

Who chose you. And adopted you. The same elder brother. Who redeemed you. By his blood. So make every effort. To keep that unity of the spirit.

In the bond of peace. Think what spirit dwells. Within them. What a father's smile. Is theirs. What a savior died to win them.

Child of heaven. Should you not love them. Well remember. We're going to live together. Forever one day. As I thought about that. I thought. You know. It would be just like God.

[49 : 22] To take. Brothers and sisters. Who have had the greatest trouble. With each other in life. And make them. Neighbors in heaven. Forever. Just to. To magnify his grace.

There will be no squabbles. We will all love each other. As brothers. Perfectly. And how it will rebound. To the glory of God. That he's taken.

Brothers and sisters. That have had a difficult time. On earth. And he's united them. Forever. Well the fact. That we're going to live forever. There ought to have some effect.

Upon us. Here. Our final destiny. Is a family reunion. You know. One of the things. About family reunions. Here. Is that not everybody. In the family. Makes it to the family.

Reunions. Do they? Some have schedule problems. Some are sick. Some have died. And gone on. But that reunion. Not one will be missing.

[50 : 20] God the father. He'll be there. Our elder brother. Jesus Christ. Will be there. And every brother. And sister of ours. Who have placed their faith.

In Jesus Christ. Will be there. Jesus said it. This is the will of him. Who sent me. That I shall lose none. Of all that he's given me. But raise them up. At the last day. For my father's will.

Is that everyone. Who looks to the son. And believes in him. Will have eternal life. And I will raise him up. At the last day. Raised up.

To be at last. At home. In the father's house. Your identity. As children of God. Is to inform. And transform. Your relationships. To those people.

Sitting around you. So let. Brotherly love. Continue. Let's pray. Thank you. Father.

[51 : 14] For your love. Love that chose us. Sought us. And found us. And called us. To yourself. Through your son. Through his blood. Gave us your spirit.

The spirit. Whose fruit. Is love. And we need him. To cause us. To increase. And abound. In this brotherly love. Come and help us.

For the peace. The health. Of each one. Of your brothers. And sisters. Here. And come and help us. To the ends.

Of the earth. That the father. Might receive praise. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.