



Life Group Study Notes

“I'm In The Family”

Ps. James Lowe - August 14, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- When you grew up, did you believe your mother and father loved you? Why?
- How many siblings did you have growing up? Who were you closest to?
- Besides your family, who do you feel closest to?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

The original sin of the first humans plunged the human condition into a spiritual, relational, and moral crisis. Judged by God they were driven from his presence. Their internal spiritual condition was now both estranged from God and twisted in its nature. Their corrupted nature was permanently damaged, so much so that all their offspring inherited this sinful condition. Until this very day every human inherits a sinful nature with its bent away from God. The consequences involve all the evil of human history, all the dysfunction of human relationships, and even death itself. Immortality had been God's intended gift to humanity, but this was forfeited by our forbears and withheld in judgement by God. The greatest travesty of this rebellion against God is our loss of relationship with him.

Yet God from the beginning foreknew this would occur, and planned to rescue and redeem his fallen human creatures. This rescue and redemption came through God himself by means of his Son, who came into this world as a human, Jesus of Nazareth. His sinless life, death, and resurrection satisfied the justice of God as Jesus served as our representative. He exchanged his perfect righteousness for our total sinfulness, so that we could exchange our total sinfulness for his perfect righteousness.

God's aim in rescuing and redeeming us is not limited to forgiving us and restoring us to a relationship with him, as good as this is. He fully intends to bring us into a relationship with him that is so close that he describes it as being one with him even as God the Father and Jesus are one. More than that, he also fully intends to bring us into relationship with one another that is just as close.

John 17:20-26 ESV

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know

you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

When we reflect on the relationships God calls us into with himself and one another, we perceive that there is a progression to how this all comes about. To enter into God's family we are first called to repent and believe. When we do, God forgives us of all our sins and his judgment against us is forever removed. God then adopts us into his family by placing his Spirit inside us. Consequently, our lives are hidden in the Beloved, meaning none other than Jesus, the Son of God. In him we experience God's amazing,mgreat love for us. All of this mirrors the progression we experience as we grow in our salvation over time. The more we believe God's truth revealed to us in Scripture by the Spirit, the more we grow in our sense of belonging--belonging to God and to his spiritual family. As we grow in our sense of belonging, we also will grow in our sense of being beloved by God.

Believe, Belong, Beloved!

God wants us to experience the health that comes to our souls when we have a strong sense of belonging to and being beloved by God and a spiritual family. Yet all this is only possible as we turn from our sin and turn to God because we believe God's testimony concerning his Son. Believing God is foundational. Belonging and experiencing love are consequential.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- When did you believe the Gospel, repent of your sins, and acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of your life?
- Do you have a strong sense of belonging to a particular church family? What helped you experience this sense of belonging?
- Do you have a strong sense of being beloved by God? By others in your church? Why or why not?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to open the ears and eyes of our hearts to hear and see God's truth so that our faith might grow.
- Ask God to increase our sense of belonging both to him and to the family of God.
- Ask God to expand our hearts to receive his love so that we might be filled with his love to the point that we cannot help but love others.