

---

## We Are Family - week 3. (February 11, 2018)

THEME VERSE: Ephesians 1:5

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

### Scripture Review:

Ephesians 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. <sup>4</sup> Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. <sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Colossians 1:12-14

He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. <sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, <sup>14</sup> who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Galatians 3:26-29

<sup>26</sup> For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. <sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ga 3:26–29). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Galatians 4

<sup>4</sup> But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. <sup>5</sup> God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. <sup>6</sup> And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ga 4:4–7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Romans 8

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

<sup>15</sup> So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received

God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

<sup>16</sup> For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ro 8:14-17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

## Philippians 1

<sup>29</sup> For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. <sup>30</sup> We are in this struggle together.

Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Php 1:29-30). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

## SERMON:

For Christmas, Craig and I gave each other the Ancestry DNA kit. We have submitted our samples, and anticipate getting results back in the next few weeks. Based on some stories from others that have done this, it could be interesting, entertaining, enlightening, and/or terrifying what we learn!

One friend's results revealed that he has more Neanderthal ( **ni'ændər,θɔl**) DNA than 59% of the population. The group began sharing photos that verified this connection - facial bone structure, etc. (Why yes, you do look like a cave man!) - and had great fun delving the possibilities of what this may mean. And reaching a consensus that 'this explains a few things!' Ha!

I've shared with most of you that in 2017, I learned that I have a half-sister that I never knew about. We look forward to talking when I get my results back. We plan to explore our family tree, which she has warned me can be what she calls a 'rabbit-hole' - once you start, it gets mesmerizing, and the next thing you know, you've been at it for hours.

No matter what our family circumstances, I think we all have an innate interest in our heritage - who were our ancestors? what were they like? where did they live? what did they do? We may find sources of pride, and issues of shame. And here is where the Good News makes such a Great Impact! No matter what our earthly heritage, when we receive Christ and are redeemed by His blood, we become new creations! We are changed, at the DNA level spiritually. We were dead in our sins, and made alive in Christ. And we have a new family tree to explore, a new set of brothers and sisters to get to know and love and live in harmony with, a relationship with the Creator of the universe that is expressed throughout Scripture in family terms. An old chorus we used to sing said:

*God is our Father,  
and Jesus is our Brother,  
and the blessed Holy Spirit is our guide.*

We are family - and we've discussed that means that you **belong**. If you've ever felt alone or like a misfit or isolated from loving relationships, this is for you - You Belong! We are Family!

This is Good News!

We have **purpose** in life, because we can join God's purpose. His purpose is to seek the lost, welcome the lost, and save the lost - adding them into his family.

We are building a **legacy** - our family right here in Vienna - that we are a church family that followed hard after God, pursuing His purpose and bringing Him glory and delight.

We are **privileged** as heirs of the promise, joint-heirs with Christ, strengthened and anointed and empowered to receive his glory and to participate in his sufferings. And we are privileged to bear one another's burdens, to suffer with - to embrace each other in our circle, and then to widen that embrace to include all of God's family. And when one suffers, we all suffer. And when one rejoices, we should all rejoice.

We exist through God's **provision** - God is our Source. The family business, so to speak, is thriving within God's provision. There are practical expressions of this - we help each other out. God's family of believers are instructed to share with one another, and additionally to reach out to the poor and needy where we are granted influence. But it is all through God's provision - not in our own merit or effort. And he has promised to supply every need according to his riches in glory.

And because of all this, the **possibilities** are beyond our limits. It's time for us to see beyond our own strength, our individual abilities, our limited size, and believe that as God's family, we can follow him in faith, without excuses, to obey any and every thing that he calls us to do.

Today, we are wrapping this up, summarizing what all these things mean for us going forward.

First:

### **Family Responsibility**

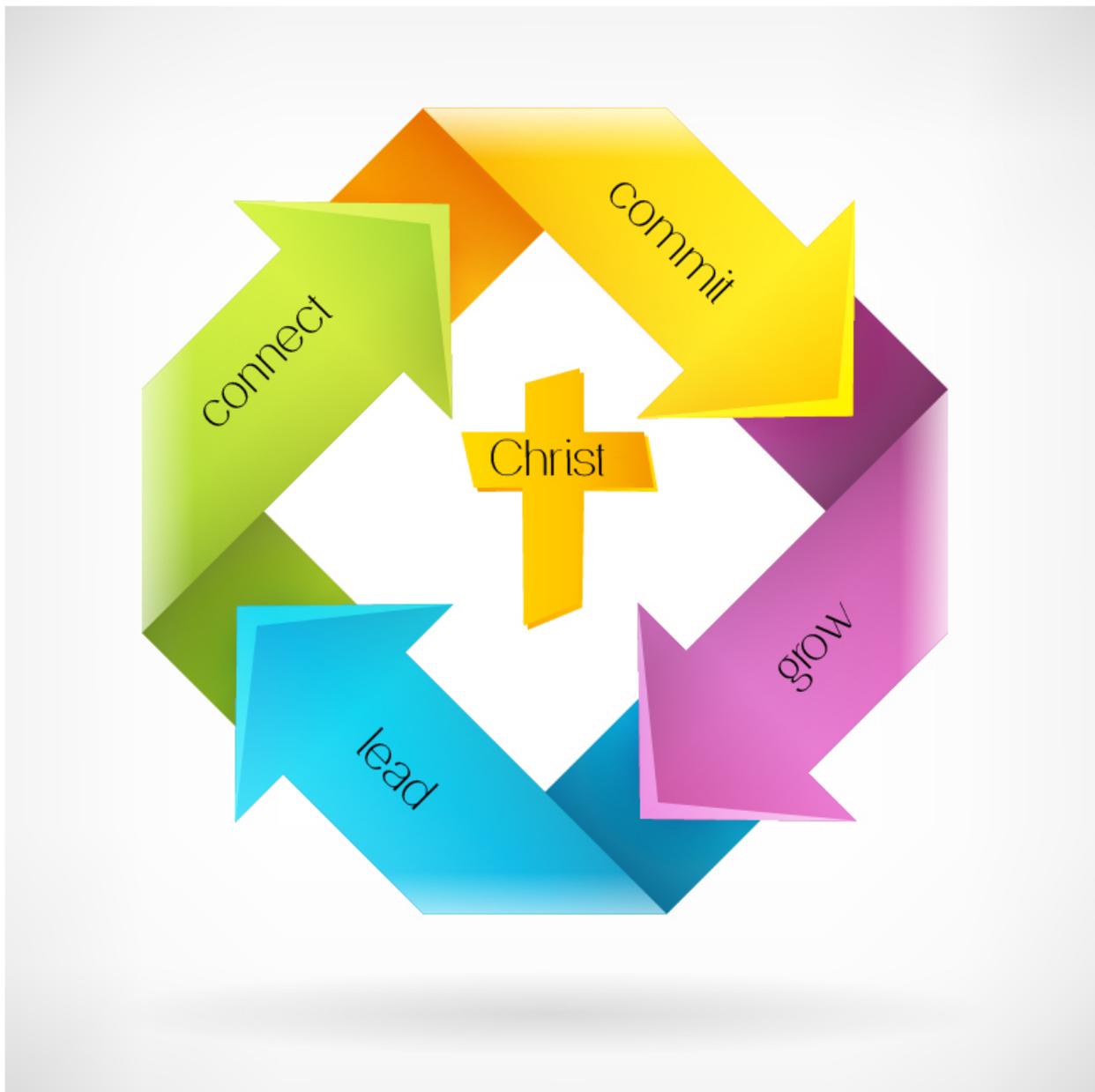
When our children were growing up, we went through multiple variations of the 'responsibility chart'. It involved lists of tasks and chores, and places to put stickers, and was generally intended to help to train habits of helping around the house. How many have something like that at your house?

As children in God's family, we belong to one another, and this is a good thing. It can also be a thing that involves 'chores' - doing stuff we'd rather not, but because we are part of the family, we have responsibilities to each other.

We have a ministry model that is simply a helpful tool to think about ways to function as a church, and to help each of you to become integrated with each other and the church family as a whole. Christ is at the center. **The flow is this:**

**CONNECT —> COMMIT —> GROW —> LEAD —>** looping back to CONNECT —> COMMIT

—> GROW—> LEAD—>, etc.



Individuals will be found in any one of these areas - and sometimes in 2, 3, or all 4 of these areas - at any given time. The goal is to continually offer avenues and environments for connection, commitment, growth, and leadership.

If we think about family responsibility, and anchor those responsibilities into this model, empowered by the Spirit of God and supported by obedience to Scripture, what are some of our responsibilities, individually and as a church family?

(let the congregation help here)

## Flourishing Community

I really like this adjective, flourishing, to describe 'community'. Don't you want to be a part of something that is flourishing?

Craig and I have had a garden now for several years, I think at least 10. But this wasn't our first garden. In our very early years of marriage, we lived in Alabama. We planted a garden, and since Craig is the agricultural guru of the family, he designed the layout of the garden. It was actually along the easement of our yard - good and useful soil that wasn't doing anything but sitting there next to an undeveloped plot of land. So why not cultivate it into a garden. For the entire length of our backyard. A narrow but very long garden. The problem with this was that it was my responsibility to actually tend the garden, and I had zero experience. So in the beginning, it wasn't a very big deal to go check on the garden, pull a weed here and there, whatever. But it didn't take long for that soil and seed and previous weed bed to begin flourishing - and whoa! I know that we harvested vegetables out of that jungle, but I don't think it is any credit to me. I remember getting horrible ant bites, dirt and sweat, and generally feeling completely overwhelmed, not up to the task, of nurturing and tending that garden.

So, when I say 'flourishing community' - I don't exactly mean an uncontrollable jungle. I mean energizing relationships, structures that guide us to spiritual growth, and paths and open doors for the community to reach out and invite others who do not yet know Jesus. It has the potential to be overwhelming, and for us to not feel up to the task, but I am convinced that We Are Family, children of God, and that He is our Provision and he has privileged us to be here, at this place, at this moment, for what he is doing in Vienna, Virginia. If we will together accept our Family Responsibilities, it will lead to Flourishing Community. However, Flourishing Community will not happen without the family responsibilities being fulfilled.

I am looking for ways to help integrate you with each other and into the ministries of Vienna Assembly of God. It might mean attending an additional gathering, not just Sunday morning. It may mean taking on a task during Sunday morning worship, to help us in the experience of welcoming newcomers. It may require a more steady commitment to church attendance and participation. It might involve stepping into a leadership role. I desire to hear from you - what is God laying on your heart? What do you feel called to contribute? What gifts do you have that are looking for expression? Let's do this together, and continue to build on the good foundation, and plant in the prepared soil, trusting God for a harvest of souls to be built up together in flourishing community.

## Fitting Celebration

When we read the story of the Lost Son a couple of weeks ago, the Father spoke these words to the older brother: WE HAD TO CELEBRATE THIS HAPPY DAY. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!

Beginning next week, and through Easter, every Sunday's service will be built on the theme LOVE BROKE THROUGH. We will be hearing amazing stories of transformation, testimonies of changed lives, and encouragement to invite others to join us - Love Breaking Through our own inhibitions and excuses, and joining God in his purpose to seek and to save the lost.

Every week, when we come together on Sunday morning, part of what we are doing is CELEBRATING THIS HAPPY DAY. It is fitting that we join in worship together - God is Holy, and Awesome, and Perfect, and Loving, He's our Savior, Deliverer, Healer, He has given of himself, so that we who were dead have come back to life! We who were lost are found! WE HAVE TO CELEBRATE THIS! We are ending today with some uplifting, celebratory worship.

It is meant to be not just celebratory, but also to be participatory. As a happy family, excited to be together in worship, joining our voices in robust praise, lifting our hands, releasing our cares and focusing on our Lord and Savior. Will you join me in this fitting celebration?