

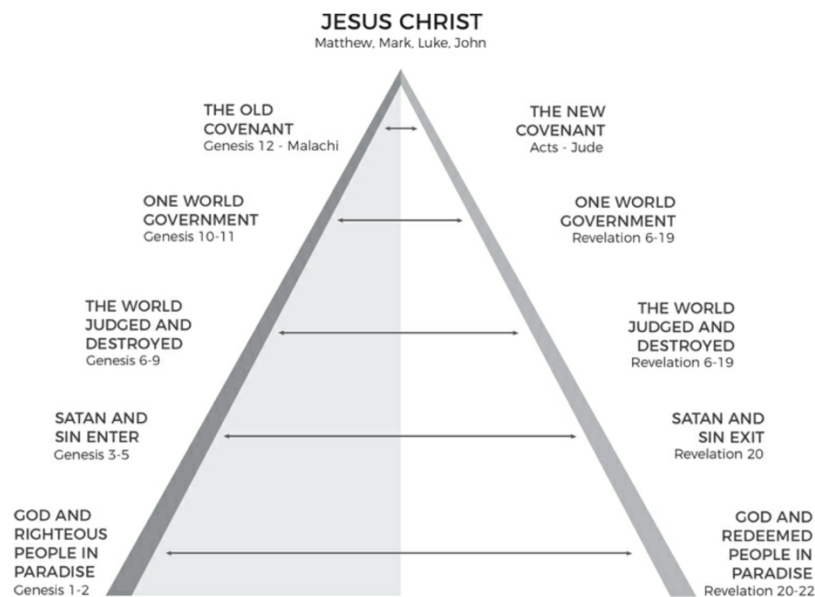
# Relationships Week One: Friends & Family



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Part One: Covenant

Called Out To Be In Covenant With God and His Family



## Ephesians 2:8-22

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For **we** are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We moved from the Court of the Gentiles to His very own household.

God found us, forgave us, desired us, and has saved us.

God accepted and brought us near when we had nothing to offer him, from that moment on we must realize that He only wants the best for us.

Larry Crabb "Papa Prayer"

"We don't grasp the staggering truth that right now, in the center of our heart, the Spirit is there. Right now, at the right hand of Papa, Jesus is praying for us. And right now, from heaven's throne, our Papa is watching over us, loving us, arranging everything for our good. We don't really believe that, not completely. We still live too often as if we're on our own, needing to protect ourselves from vampires and alligators, from inconsiderate husbands, cold wives, sulky children, and disloyal friends. That's relational sin. We protect ourselves from what God tells us we don't need to fear. We devote our creative energies to calm our terror, to find some way to feel alive and wanted and happy."

**Relational Sin** is moving toward another with my will in mind at any cost to you.

**Relational Holiness** is moving toward another with their well-being in mind at any cost to me.

Questions:

1. How often do you think about being in God's family?
2. Do you see others in the church as family or as strangers who attend the same church as you?

# Part Two: Culture

## Embodying the Culture of God's Family

**2 Corinthians 11:2-4** I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

The 4 Characteristics that define the Culture of God's Family

1. Acceptance
2. Forgiveness
3. Self-sacrifice
4. Love

"Love, acceptance, forgiveness—those three things are absolutely essential to consistently bring people to maturity and wholeness. If the church—the living presence of Christ in His people—is to be the force for God in the world that it should be, it must learn to love people, accept them and forgive them. The minimal guarantee we must make is that we will love them—always, under every circumstance, with no exceptions. The second guarantee is that we will accept them totally, without reservation. The third thing we must guarantee people is that no matter how miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, our unreserved forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth."

Jerry Cook Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness

### #1 Acceptance

Acceptance is the invite toward Intimacy (in to me you see). It means to be fully known and fully accepted.

Acceptance is not Agreement

Acceptance is not based on approved behavior. It is based on the value of the person. But if we communicate personal rejection, they will never be around long enough to be touched by God through us.

### #2 Forgiveness

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Forgiveness is not Compromise

Forgiveness is releasing another from our own personal judgment.

Forgiveness is an act of self renunciation.

*“Ultimately, forgiveness is not an emotion; it’s a decision. We don’t forgive with our memory or emotions—we forgive with our will.”*

Jerry Cook Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness

*“To excuse what can really produce good excuses is not Christian character; it is only fairness. To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. How can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers each night ‘forgive our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.’ We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God’s mercy for ourselves. There is no hint of exceptions and God means what He says.”*

C. S. Lewis - The weight of Glory.

### #3 Self-sacrifice

Who is the greatest?

Lording over people is off the table in God’s family. Serving is on the table in God’s family.

Self-serving is off the table and self-sacrifice is on the table in God’s family.

Bad Myth: Serving is draining. I need to get feed and I need a group of successful people to help me get successful. Don’t hang around the chicken coup, fly with the eagles.

### #4 Love

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (1 John 3:14).

Love does.

The mentality in our culture leads us to love and give only when there is reason to assume that our love will be reciprocated.

Our love for others must never be confused as a license for their destructive behavior toward us, toward others or toward themselves. Love commits itself to their “highest good” and stands stubbornly and relentlessly against their destruction.

Love is not license

**Mark 10:21** And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

When love, acceptance and forgiveness characterize our lives and our churches, the Lord will send us people who need to be made whole.