



Some Reflections For The Week

Feel free to go through this material alone or with your midweek gatherings!

We gather for relationships. Relationships are the heartbeat of the church. We were made and formed from relationship, and made to *be* in relationship with one another. Unfortunately, relationships are messy. People are complicated! Even when we have nothing but good intentions towards one another, the brokenness within us and our sinful natures can cause us to hurt and wound each other again and again.

Nothing is more indicative of this than our familial relationships. So much of who we are has been influenced by the way we have experienced relationship through family. We likely all can think of ways that our family has impacted us both positively and negatively. Family is messy! Even in the Scriptures, there are few examples of positive familial relationships. The first murder happened between two brothers. Noah, the only man deemed righteous enough to live after the Flood, was discovered naked and drunk by his sons. Jacob the deceiver played favourites and raised a spoiled child who got in trouble with the rest of his brothers, and who was consequently sold off to slavery. Even King David, the man who was after God's own heart, was forgotten by his own father and had a son who tried to overthrow his place on the throne by murdering him.

But Scripture also tells us that things are different now. Things are different not because we are different but because we have a good God, who, in His rich mercy and with the great love with which He loves us, made us alive in Christ Jesus and adopted us into His household, the household and family of God. (Eph. 2)



1. How do you feel after reading about these examples in the Scriptures? Does that bring your relief and comfort, sadness and heaviness, or empathy for brothers and sisters who are struggling with family problems?

Does it encourage you to know about Timothy's sincere faith, which was passed down by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice? What about Jesus' perfect relationship with God the Father, and the love and adoration that they have for each other?

2. Writer Henri Nouwen shares his own reflections on community:

"A desire for communion has been part of you since you were both. The pain of separation which you experienced as a child and continue to experience now reveals to you this deep hunger... This desire is sincere. Don't look on it as an expression of your neediness or as a symptom of your neurosis. It comes from God and is part of your true vocation.

"Nevertheless, your fear of abandonment and rejection is so intense that your search for communion is often replaced by a longing for concrete expressions of friendship or affection... When these do not come in the way you wish, you start distrusting your deep desire for communion. Your search for communion often takes place too far from where true communion can be found."

What do you think Nouwen means when he writes that "your search for communion often takes place too far from where true communion can be found", and how might that help us be more present, and not be afraid of vulnerability and intimacy in our relationships with one another?

3. What might be some of the ways in which you are challenged to respond differently to your family—whether it is your biological or spiritual family—moving forward? For those whom it is not possible or appropriate to respond in such a way, how can you be bringing your difficulties and obstacles to God through prayer?

Lastly, in what ways can your group grow as a family?