



Let's pray:

April 2024

How can we pray well as we head into this new month?



The Great Family

Growing up, I was the middle child in a household with four children. If you've grown up with multiple siblings or if you're parenting multiple children, you will no doubt understand the chaos that at times can flood into the house!

Now, as I write this I am in my mid-twenties, and my siblings and I aren't all under the same roof anymore, however, as I reflect on our childhood together, I am particularly thankful for my wonderful family, my parents and my siblings but I also think we who are followers of Jesus have an even greater family that we get to be a part of. I'm talking about the family of God.

Romans 8:14-15 says this:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' - Romans 8:14-15 (NRSV)

These verses are powerful as they speak about our inherited, collective identity as Christians. We are children of God, who through the Holy Spirit have been accepted into His family. With this newfound identity comes a new way of living, acting and thinking. One which reflects the heart of our Father.

In the 1st century Roman world, the context which Paul lived in and knew, an adopted child was chosen deliberately by the father to carry on his name, the child was given new rights, their old debts were cancelled and nothing in their past counted against them anymore. They were, in a way, a brand-new person!

What Paul is saying then is that we, as Christians, have been given new life! A new way of living is available to us, one which reflects the heart of our heavenly Father and one which carries with it benefits for us and those around us. One such benefit is our membership into a wonderful great family.



A great family

The Bible is full of wonderful verses which highlight the wonderful family dynamic of the kingdom of God. Here are two of my personal favourite verses:

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. - Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - John 13:34-35 (NIV)

The new family we have been brought into is one which calls on each of us to look out for one another and to be compassionate and loving to one another. And as we do this, we become a witness for Jesus.

At times, however, it can feel hard or even borderline impossible to live in such a way. It is often easier to be on the receiving end of love and compassion than it is sometimes to be loving and compassionate. However, I find encouragement in the knowledge that living in such a way is not something I have to try to do in my own strength. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit, working through me, and working through us that helps us live as Christ lived, loving one another, and caring for one another.



I am aware, however, that there are some people, both believers and not, who do not have a positive experience of family. People's whose lived experience seems unrecognisable to the great family we have as Christians.

This year in the UK around 38,000 children and young people will enter the care system. These are children and young people who perhaps cannot spend time with their siblings, and perhaps do not have many memories of their birth family. Children and young people who are longing for a place they can call home, and for a stable, supportive family that they can build memories with and thrive.

So, as we remember both our own families and thank God for accepting us into his great family, let us remember those that might not be able to see or spend time with their birth families and need a stable and supportive home.





Points for Prayer

- 1. Let's thank** God for the blessing of being part of His family. May we appreciate the love and support of our spiritual siblings and seek to reflect His love in our interactions.
- 2. Let's pray** for those who have a distanced, difficult or less positive experience of family, whether due to circumstances or being in the care system.
- 3. Let's pray** that these people may encounter their heavenly Father and find belonging in His great family, experiencing His love through supportive communities.