

## The Extended Family is Bigger Than You Think

Many of us are fortunate to live near our extended family, or at least see them at times during the year. The recent holiday season, between Thanksgiving and New Years' Day, is one of those seasons when many families try to get together. We often think of our extended family as including grandparents, siblings, nieces, nephews, uncles and aunts. We treat these relatives with special care because of our mutual love for each other.

God sees a much bigger picture. He sees us as part of the family of God. *"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother"* (Mark 3:35). He wants us to broaden our care and concern wider than our own relatives.

If the Bible tells us our family includes all believers how does it change our relationships with others? Are we compassionate toward the needs of others? Do we pitch in during their time of need? Our personal ministry could include providing emotional and physical support to believers around us. Paul, in his letter to the church at Galatia said: *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers* (Galatians 6:10).



A great example is each Sunday at church. Look around the fellowship hall during coffee hour. The people gathered there are people of faith who happen to worship at the same place as we do. During coffee hour who do you talk to? Do you greet the same friends each week, or do you broaden your horizon to get to know other people? *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household* (Ephesians 2:19). As you talk with a wider circle of friends, listen for their needs and see if there is something you can do to help them – emotionally, physically or spiritually. Perhaps you overcame an issue they are facing now and could be a big help to someone else. You don't know the possibilities until you get to know others and understand their needs.

As you widen your relationships in the family of God you will help others to strengthen their faith. It may inspire them to help others, multiplying your impact. *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith* (Galatians 3:26). The family of God is a wonderful family, and is as big as the number of believers. Just as God adopted us into His family, we can extend the friendship of the faith with all others around us. *He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will* (Ephesians 1:5). We can live together as an extended family where everyone can flourish in love.

Caring for others is God's will for us. Let God's will be done.

**Additional Scripture reference:** *And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children* (Romans 8:16)

**Question:** In what ways do you extend care and concern outside of your immediate family?

**Prayer:** Most gracious Heavenly Father. You have invited us into your family, providing for our needs and guiding our lives. We pray we will extend your love and concern to others so that we all can prosper together. Amen.