

The Harris Herald

August 2019

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born,

**not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man,
but of God.**

John 1:12–13

The month of July was made up mostly of seeing and spending time together with Ellie's side of the family.

We did a lot of traveling back and forth between her various siblings—all of different ages and at different stages in life. This was the first time we were actually able to stop and see each and every one of them! Regardless of the amount of time we spent together, we were grateful for the gift of getting to see and spend time with them...and we do not take it for granted.

We were able to attend 2 different family reunions over the summer. The first one was a small gathering with her grandma's siblings and relatives. This was the first time for us to go all together as a family, with myself and the kids, since Ellie was young. The second one was a much bigger gathering of all of her grandma's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. It was neat to see how the various generations and branches of one family...can spread so far and wide! We have each gone our separate ways, living very different lives from one another—and yet the bond between blood still brings us back for one unified purpose. As time passes and various relationships wax and wane, we can understand and appreciate the gift of being part of a “family” in ways we didn't before. God in His goodness, has given us a picture, an example of what it means to belong, to be a part of

something bigger than ourselves, to be a valuable player who contributes what and where we can (according to our ability), in return for all that we gain.

***Taken from “Got Questions.org”**

The concept of family is extremely important in the Bible, both in a physical sense and in a theological sense.

The concept of family was introduced in the very beginning, as we see in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” God’s plan for creation was for men and women to marry and have children. A man and a woman would form a “one-flesh” union through marriage (Genesis 2:24), and they with their children become a family, the essential building block of human society.

The Bible has a more communal sense of people and family than is generally held in Western cultures today, where citizens are more individualized than people in the Middle East and definitely more so than the people of the ancient near East. We see that family members were to look after and care for one another. The importance of family can be seen in so many various ways woven throughout the Scriptures.

Let’s now turn our attention to the theological concept of family. During His three-year ministry, Jesus shattered some prevailing notions of what it meant to be part of a family: “While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting

to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’” (Matthew 12:46-50).

Now we must clear up some misconceptions with this passage. Jesus is not saying that biological family isn’t important; He is not dismissing His mother and brothers. What He is doing is making the clear theological point that in the Kingdom of Heaven, the most important family connection is spiritual, not physical. This is a truth made explicitly clear in John’s Gospel, when the evangelist says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1: 12-13).

The parallels are quite clear. When we are born physically, we’re born into a physical family, but when we are “born again,” we are born into a spiritual family. To use Pauline language, we are adopted into God’s family (Romans 8:15). When we are adopted into God’s spiritual family, the Church, God becomes our Father and Jesus our Brother. This spiritual family is not bound by ethnicity, gender or social standing. As Paul says, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to

Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

So what does the Bible say about family? The physical family is the most important building block to human society, and as such, it should be nurtured and protected. But more important than that is the new creation that God is making in Christ, which is comprised of a spiritual family, the Church, made up of all people who call upon the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. This is a family drawn "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9), and the defining characteristic of this spiritual family is love for one another: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13: 34-35)

As for us, we have noted several times this "time around" how truly blessed we are to be able to be a part of a family: by blood and by Jesus' blood. We thank God for both our biological families, and the larger family of God. And we recognize the special blessing it is to have family members who are a part of BOTH of these! We want the same thing that our Heavenly Father also desires: "that ALL should come to Him, and that NONE should perish." We hope and pray for all of those who do not yet know Him-that they will one day. And we look forward to the day when we will be reunited again, with family-forever. No more "good-byes" or even "see you later's" no need to "catch up" or "keep up" with what is going on in one another's lives...but blessed, beautiful, unbroken fellowship with our Heavenly Father, and our

brothers and sisters in our heavenly home!

In Christ,

Brad Harris

See Family Photos Below





Family





Prayer Requests

- For any and all family and friends who do not yet know Jesus, that they one day will
- For our family as we are trying to settle into some sort of “routine” in Nebraska (in between travel)
- Specifically for the kids as they attend the local public school: that they would learn to “be IN the world, but not OF the world.” And that this “testing/trial” period would



Praises

- Safety in all the travels
- For our biological family
- For the family of God

work to help them own their own personal faith.

- For Ellie and I to trust the Lord in this time: to remember that HE is the One Who is ultimately their Teacher, their Shield, and Defender (whether they are taught at home or the public school system).
- For wisdom, clarity and direction
- For our missionary visa to be renewed
- For open eyes and obedient hearts to respond to opportunities and open/closed doors
- That we would be obedient to the Lord, in ALL areas, as we try to live out our faith in HIM

- For the blessing of being able to see and spend time together with family
- That we have a place to be a “base” between travels
- We celebrated another year of life for both Ellie and Rose
- For the Lord's faithfulness to provide for ALL of our needs-especially Himself
- For all of the prayers, financial gifts, and various encouragements we receive by the sacrifice of others