

**SUNDAY 25 JANUARY 2009**  
**WE ARE FAMILY**  
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**WE ARE AN AUTHENTIC FAMILY (Debbie's story)**

Foundational verses:

*"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."*

**EPHESIANS 3:14,15**

**ACTS 2:42-47**

**BIBLICAL METAPHORS FOR THE CHURCH**

*THE CHURCH IS DESCRIBED AS AN ARMY, A BRIDE, A TEMPLE, A BODY, BUT THE DOMINANT ONE IS FAMILY. CGC is a growing family, but we are part of a great family. Our FAMILY TREE spans thousands of years, miles and cultures. The bible describes this family as "an innumerable company". It's BIG.*

*"Authentic" = of undisputed origin; genuine • made or done in the traditional or original way, or in a way that faithfully resembles an original: the restaurant serves authentic Italian meals | every detail of the movie was totally authentic.*

*In relation to the church it means a real representation of the original ideal!*

**HEALTHY FAMILY TRAITS**

**1. "FATHER" FOCUS:**

- *It's the Father's family first! Eph3: 14,15.... He is the first principle of family life! (Jesus came to introduce us to God as Father. "Our Father...)*
- *John 20:16,17 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (Which means Teacher). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*
- *In this family He gets to set the agenda. It's not my family where I set the agenda!*
- *The Father's agenda means we are about our Father's business! WE are all out to live lives that please Him. His grace has led to an extreme makeover of our lives!*

- **Warning: An unholy and unhelpful tension is choosing between the interests of your family and the family of faith! It's very silly to hive off and make your own family your faith family!**
- **SYMBIOS** = a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship between two people or groups *Encarta*
- **. THE FAITH FAMILY LIVES FOREVER (OUR FAMILIES MORPH INTO THAT HIGHER REALITY IN THE AGES OF AGES.) MAKE THIS FAMILY, CENTRAL NOT PERIPHERAL. IT'S NOT AN ADDENDUM TO YOUR LIFE!**
- *His word is final and His perspectives are wise!*
- *Churches with a Father focus become wise churches! They breed wise families.*
- *The Father's message to the world: "You come into my family through my Son!"*
- *If we are more excited about each other and our programs than we are about our Heavenly Father, we have stopped being the church family!*
- *Finally our CGC leadership model borrows strongly from this metaphor. We are nurturing and nudging more than policing and prescribing. Our calling as leaders in this community is to develop a fathering and mothering culture*

## **2. GUARANTEES OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND FORGIVENESS ... Authentic belonging!**

- Our greatest human need is not another beer. It's not a new job. It's love!
- Eph 3 speaks of being rooted and grounded in love = **the soil of security!**
- **The one who has loved you has forgiven and accepted you. We guarantee this to our brothers and sisters! ILLUS: USA RELATIONSHIP/this morning in my inbox... FORGIVENESS!**
- You may have been born into a family that did not guarantee these graces, but the Father's family does.
- Churches are families that are essentially defined by them! WE never hold out on each other!
- Our language and culture is that of **MEETINGS!**

## **3. CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY... Authentic inclusivity! (Mickey's story)**

- *Belonging is easy when it's all your kind of people! Story of the Duck, the crow and the dove! (Jesus called Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector into a very diverse community!)*
- **ON day of when the church was born 3000 people were added from all over the world!**
- *"To live above with those we love..."*
- *In any family you get kids that are both similar and radically different! In this family too.*
- *We need to extend the generous freedom that God does. He has kids from all walks, cultures, political parties (Story of Terry with*

- Republican!)*, Sharks supporters, above the line and below the line, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, fat and thin etc
- In every family there are **different levels of maturity**, and that explains why some family members can be a bit of an embarrassment! (You won't embarrass us if you dress a bit differently. Or if you do wild things with your hair, or even if you love tattoos!
  - **You embarrass the family not with appearance, but with behaviour!** If you steal, gossip, abuse, or live selfishly, or, support the Stormers!) It's about claiming a certain family genetic, but never living it out. That's embarrassing!

#### **4. Authentic GROWTH ON ALL FRONTS like in Acts 2...the Lord added!**

- Not a growth driven by hype, personalities or fads. But multi-pronged healthy growth is what God want every local church family to experience.
- **NB Q:** 2 families, one in a combi with 10 kids, another in a beetle with 2, which is warmer? It's the wrong Q: It's, what are the parents like?
- **Acts 2 shows the early Jerusalem church to be explosive in its growth.** People were being added regularly to their number = to the family, to the tribe! **There is no kind of spiritual contraception!**
- Numerically, in maturity (they devoted themselves to the teaching), prayer muscle and in generosity.
- Later we see this family multiplying leaders in Acts 6. (Had to grow their relational range. Jews and Hebrews clashing around perceptions of favouritism. It could be rich vs poor, old vs young, black vs white etc)
- Growth creates a whole lot of problems that no growth never has to face. **But biblically built families grow and find the wisdom to cope!!**
- **The world needs to see this and wonder what's happening! .... They have been fed the lie through much of the media that the church is lost cause, leaders are perverts, Christians don't think, we are still in the last millennium, we are stifling peoples freedoms and are after their money! Servant-hearted growing churches are a sign and a wonder! SEEING A FAMILY WANTING THE BEST FOR THEIR PEOPLE AND NOT FROM THEIR PEOPLE IS A SIGN AND A WONDER IN OUR CULTURE!**
- **WE ARE GROWING:** Next week we are multiplying our evening meeting = adding a room for the new kids!
- But it doesn't stop there. There are thousands of lonely people that God wants to put in families (Ps68: 6). Are we going to complain about the house being stuffy, or are we going to add a room? **In the very near future we are going to multiply the am meetings into 2 too!**
- This means 4 meetings on a Sunday. **4 opportunities for you to come and 4 opportunities for our city to come and explore what we are so excited about!**

- *This means the older brothers and sisters are going to need to prepare for the new arrivals!*

#### **5. ATTRACTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE... Authentic openness!**

- *Vs47 "...enjoying the favour of all the people." WOW!*
- *Warm families create a magnetic field of inclusivity!*
- *Good coffee helps but it can never substitute for graciousness and genuine care!*
- *The key words that are shaping us are: HOSTING, EXCELLENCE, REALITY AND WARMTH!*

#### **6. "DEVOTE THEMSELVES" TO MEETING TOGETHER REGULARLY... Authentic commitment to hanging out!**

- *Local church meeting rhythms: Acts 2:46 publicly and in homes daily!*
- *"At the time of prayer" Acts 3:1*
- *It's like gathering at the Father's table! It's the family that prays/pays/plays together stays together. Relational cohesion grows around the rhythms of shared life.*
- *Our rhythm is prioritizing Sunday gatherings (not golf, fishing, surfing = good things becoming ultimate things. This is measured by what you put first!) Where we worship and learn together.*
- *Being in a small group (we have around 65 of all age groups and locations) and trying to get to our prayer meeting on Thursday am here in the main venue.*

#### **7. LAVISH SACRIFICIAL LOVE.... Authentic affection**

- *As in Acts 2 where they shared their lives and resources so lavishly. NO manipulation!*
- *BY this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other!*
- *The credibility of our faith is on trial through the consistency of our love!*
- *Biblical love is not self-indulgent. It always focuses away from itself! AGAPE LOVE*
- *For God, One another, our city, our world.*

#### **FINALLY, HOW DOES ONE JOIN THE FAMILY?**

1. *BY NEW BIRTH*
2. *BY DIVINE PLACEMENT*
3. *BY CHOICE*

Back to our foundational verse Eph3: 14 "... before the Father".... goes on to His glory in the church and the immeasurably more that He can and wants to do through His church family through all generations! YES HE CAN! Yes He will!  
Will the islands please return to the mainland!