

Why are we here?
#3 Family Ties
Romans 12:9-13

Introduction: God's plan from the start was that we would become a part of His family. Paul wrote: *"God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure."* (Ephesians 1:5 NLT). Just like we are part of a family, God desired that we not only **believe**, but that we **belong**. Now that's great news – that we not only have a heavenly Father, but that we also have brothers and sisters to do life with. Sadly, that can sometimes be a challenge. Like all families, relationships can be bumpy, yet there is a value that defines the family of God like nothing else. Jesus put it this way: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another"* (John 13:34 NIV). Let's think about how we can outwork that command of Christ.

Ice Breaker:

Share a time that you felt closer to a Christian brother or sister, than to your own siblings. (Keep in mind, your own siblings can also be a Christian brother or sister!!)

Questions to consider.

1. In what ways can I begin to treat other believers, especially those in my home church, like my family?
2. Read Galatians 5:14 and ask... Are relationships my first priority? How can I ensure this?
3. Again, Paul writes "... so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5 NIV). How do you feel about this statement? Comfortable, uncomfortable, encouraged, concerned, threatened (people might get to know me!), pumped?? Some other feeling? If this truth describes godly relationships, how do you consciously work towards belonging to others?
4. Read Romans 12:9-13. What is your greatest challenge in being a part of the body of Christ? Loving un-hypocritically; Devoted affection (v10a); honouring others even if they don't deserve it (v10b); enthusiasm or passion (v11); patient endurance (v12); generosity (v13); hospitality (v13).
5. **Honouring** others (Romans 12:10b), especially if we don't think they deserve it, is a challenge. What does honouring another apprentice of Christ look like to you? Can you find evidence of God's grace in their lives? Remember that they are, God's children, & stay aware of your own need for grace. Today or tomorrow, consciously decide to honour someone that you have never honoured before. Ensure that you tell the truth, and not flatter.
6. **Hospitality** was a huge value in the middle east in Jesus day, and should be today. In what ways can you intentionally be hospitable in today's culture that is so individualistic? What might that look like for you and your family; your connect group; our church?

Ponder

If this is the next purpose of your life – to be a part of a loving family – discuss in your group what that could look like. What will love require of each one of you this week as you go into your workplaces *"to be a people who live out the love of Jesus wherever we are, actively following His call to make disciples."* (Thrive's Mission)