

Then they will **rebuild** the ancient ruins, They will raise up the former devastations, And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations. (Isaiah 61:4)

Rebuild

Welcome to the Family

You are invited over to someone's house for dinner. You ring the doorbell and a smiling face greets you. "Welcome, we've been expecting you. C'mon in and meet the wife and kids. "

You meet the family and are impressed. Everyone seems so happy.

"O.K., kids, time to gather around the table." The kids answer their mom's call by quickly and quietly taking their seats. The meal begins with everyone holding hands, while the Dad leads everyone in a beautiful prayer...

"Father, thanks for our friend who is with us, and for this food. And thanks most of all for this wonderful family. Amen."

When the evening is through, you are warmly escorted to the door. The hostess gives you a heaping plate of leftovers, each of the children gives you an affectionate hug, and the family stands huddled in the doorway waving a friendly good-bye.

"What a wonderful family!" you think to yourself. But all of a sudden your thoughts are interrupted with, "Oh, my gosh! I forgot my gloves!"

You hurry back to the house to find two cars quickly pulling out of the drive; one is driven by the wife, the other by the husband.

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The Church: God's Family SEVEN Days A Week

"Where are you going? Is there an emergency?" you call out.

"No," the husband yells from the car window. "It is just time for us all to go home."

"Home?! I thought you lived here?"

"Naw, this is just where we do our 'family thing.' The wife and I live in separate condos cross-town."

"But where are the kids? I don't see them with either of you!"

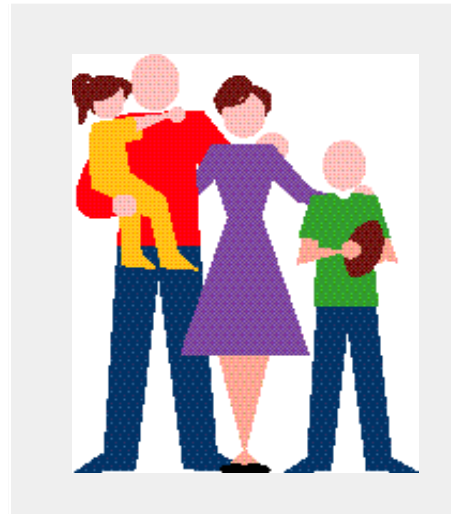
The mom shouts out her answer while readying herself for a quick get-away, "They live on the streets. ... Oh, I almost forgot, you left these." She suddenly reaches out her hand to give you your gloves.

The husband shouts, "See ya again soon!" while screeching his tires for a fast getaway.

"Yes, we enjoyed it!" the woman shouts to the bewildered guest as she accelerates in the opposite direction.

You were worried about losing your gloves. Now you are worried about losing your mind.

The Christian Church is to be a people who share their lives with one another as if they were family. As if? No, this is a bad way to say it. The Bible clearly states that each



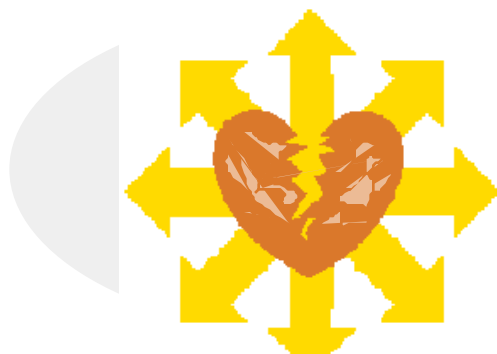
Christian is a part of God's Family—each believer relating to one another as if they are brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers (1 Timothy 5:1-2), each a live-in resident of God's household (Ephesians 2:19).

Family: More Than 1 hr a Week

The average Christian "attends" Church. The above average Christian puts "extra time in" to be involved in Christian service (being involved in his/her "family thing"). But being a Christian means more than attendance or even scheduled ministry. Being a Christian is about loving. Loving God. Loving one another. Where there is this kind of Holy Spirit empowered love, God is able to manifest what it means to be His Family.

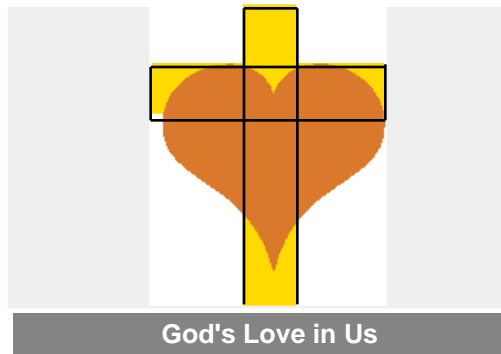
At Pentecost, Peter, his head still warm from the tongues of fire, preached the Gospel. The result? People gave themselves to Christ *and* to one another. This is what happens when the Gospel is preached in Pentecostal power. God's love is made alive, and people love one another: "And all those who had believed *were together* and had all things in common" (Acts 2:42).

God made them Family.



The Christian intuitively knows there is much more to being a member of God's Family than merely sharing a pew...

Rev. Jordan Bajis is the pastor of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, a Christian Community in Fort Collins, Colorado. He has served as a missionary, a religious advisor to university students, and has been involved in Church renewal movements for more than 20 years.



Paul says, "The love of God has been poured into our hearts" (Romans 5:5). The Christian intuitively knows there is much more to being a member of God's family than merely sharing a pew. The Christian knows God's love calls him or her to share one's *life*. The love of God that lives within us will be grieved by anything less.

As we leave the parking lots of our Churches, each going in different directions, the world wonders about our message. The "service" may have been beautiful, but how we live (or fail to live) with one another is a contradiction. We say we are Family, but in most respects we are only co-attenders.

I think I know a reason for our problem. There are too many things in our lives nibbling away at us — job, expectations of friends and family, debt burdens, home responsibilities. It is tough to commit yourself to brothers and sisters in Christ when you already feel like you are being eaten alive by ducks. What is left to give?

Let's admit it; it *is* hard. But God's Spirit within us can make the difficult possible. And even more, our obedience to Him makes such a vision a certainty.

The first step is to be clear that God made us to *be* Family; therefore, we are called to *relate* as if we are *related*. The second step is to ask God's help in resisting all that would slice-n-dice us, and choose to make relationships with God and His People a priority before things. Practically, this means we have to work on simplifying our lives so we have the time to live out what we believe. The third step is to listen to the Holy Spirit Who lives within us; His gentle voice will lead us in specific and definite ways that will encourage loyalty, commitment, and familial love.

Jordan Bajis

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