

# The Church

## the family of God

### Start Here

- Were you able to memorize the Lord's prayer?
- In what ways has using the Lord's prayer strengthened your prayer life?

### Discuss

Think about healthy family relationships that you have observed or experienced – in your own life, people you know, or even those you've seen from afar. In what ways were grandparents, parents, children, siblings, and other relatives a blessing to each other? How do your observations shape what you believe healthy family life should look like?

### Main Idea

Family life has a profound impact on everybody. Some have had good experiences, while for others the relationships are difficult or altogether absent.

Regardless of your family experience, as believers we all have the privilege and joy of being members of the family of God – his church. And Jesus promised to be with his church wherever they meet, even in small groups of two or three (Matthew 18:20). The church is not a building or an institution. Rather, the church is the people. As we gather together in his name in buildings, in homes, outdoors, or even online, his Spirit nurtures us, builds us, and empowers us. It is through the family that we learn to live in love and peace, grow in our worship of God and participate in his kingdom coming.

### Explore the Word (Part 1)

Jesus gave a very clear command to his disciples about how he wanted them to relate to one another.

- Read John 13:34-35

What does he want his church to be known by? Whose example are we to follow as we love each other?

When the church was born on the day of Pentecost, the family of God began to grow. In Acts 2, we read a simple description of what this looked like.

- Read Acts 2:42-47

What did the family of God actually do together? List at least seven ways the believers were involved in building the church.

In what ways are you participating in the church and playing your part in the family?

## Explore the Word (Part 2)

The church is not perfect because we are not perfect. Sometimes we hurt each other or offend one another. But that does not give us a reason to leave the body. Rather, we stick together and love each other through our imperfections, and we commit to nurture and contribute to the body's health and strength. We all have a part to play.

As the church grew and spread, it faced opposition from those outside the church as well as inevitable challenges of dealing with differences within the family. Therefore, the New Testament is full of encouragement to believers to keep going in love and pursue the way of Jesus together.

- Read Hebrews 10:23-25

Why is this instruction important for us? What role do you have in the church?

## Practice Together Now

All over the world there are different local expressions of the family of God. Some are large and some are small.

- Are you part of a gathering of believers?
- If not, where could you start?
- If yes, make a plan to engage more in the life of your church:
  - What can you participate in that will strengthen you?
  - What can you do to reach and serve others?

Together thank the Lord that you belong to the family. Commit to Jesus to stay connected to his family, and ask for opportunities to interact with more brothers and sisters in the Lord. What else can you thank God for as you think about the church?

## Review your Practice Daily

- Find time to actually engage in the ways you discussed together.
- Share a prayer request with someone in your local church family and if possible, have them pray with you in person.
- Ask others in your church how you can pray for them.
- Volunteer to help at your next church gathering.