

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS FOR OUR TIMES

OUR IDENTITY AS A FAMILY OF CHURCHES AND LEADERS

As a family of Churches and leaders, we use the phrase "God's Family of Spirit-filled Disciples Together on His Mission" to describe how we walk out our life together. It's a phrase full of meaning and depth for many of us and represents decades of living life as God has shown us to live, with sacrificial love and familial commitment that comes from the Lord and not merely our decisions. As wonderful as it is, we can't lose sight that there is a priority in the phrase and the Scriptures that we would do well to remember. In the end, the primary emphasis must always be on God. It is God's family and God's mission, and we take part in that. He is in charge and determines how we walk together based on His Word and the empowering of His Spirit.

When speaking of God's design for family, it is essential to note that He is a family - "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*" (Gen 1:26). Family is a concept that He originated because it is in His nature. **We are created in His image, so we reflect that nature in our natural and Church family.**

Family matters to God. God arranged the first marriage, saved a specific family from the flood, and called a particular father, Abram, to become a great nation that would bless all other nations. Consistently through Scripture, God has worked through families as He accomplishes His will. Even when God sent Jesus to the Earth, God put Him in a family context. He did not just appear on the scene as a fully-formed adult. God sent Him from the Eternal Family in heaven and He was born into and raised in a loving family on earth.

Throughout the New Testament, the family is referenced, and disciples are encouraged to walk together in a spiritual family: the Church. The physical family is a template for how men and women are to treat each other. Paul encourages Timothy to "*not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity*" (1 Timothy 5:1).

The family is where we mature as we learn to walk with others unselfishly. Because the family is God's loving design for how humans live and learn, it is continually under attack. When sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience, even the first marriage produced a family that

had an innocent victim (Abel) and a jealous murderer (Cain) in it. Satan, a fallen world, and our unredeemed flesh conspire to undermine the family at every opportunity. This is not a new strategy, but the tactics are more overt in our culture than we are used to, and it takes Spirit-led discernment and the Word of God to persevere as salt and light.

As God's family, want to examine these Essential Truths For Our Times to help discern ideas that may work to erode God's design for us to be "A Spirit-filled family of disciples together on His mission.