

- *Build Empathy and Hospitality*

*32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

*- Ephesians 4:32 NLT*

*9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

*- 1 Peter 4:9-10 NIV*

*Empathy requires us to take the time and come close enough to “see” someone. Hospitality requires us to be of service to someone. Find time this week to do both by reaching out to invite someone to coffee, or take a walk together, for the purpose of listening closely to them and allow your heart to become tender towards them. Share some ideas with your group of who you might get together with.*

## **WRAP-UP**

A church is a community of people, not a physical structure. It is more than a place to get your needs met, it is the family of God where we belong. And as your family it requires developing and deepening the relationships you form there. It is in the family of believers that we grow and are shaped into Christ's image. If we are going to be Jesus's followers, then we are brothers and sisters with all Christians and should embrace and develop our relationships with them.

## **MEMORY VERSE**

***26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. - Galatians 3:26-28 NLT***

*Challenge- Search out the “one another” verses and look for ways you can reflect the Kingdom of God by how you treat the family of God.*

## **The Church - A New Family No Longer Strangers - Week 2**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Our culture is tending less and less towards strong group relationships, and more and more into isolation and individualism. In the 1960's, there was more connection through our neighborhoods, bowling leagues, fraternal organizations and Sunday schools. It was a time when we considered the good of our group over our own desires. President Kennedy famously said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” As our focus has turned inward, we've also lost the view of the church as a family and replaced it with a destination, or the place I get my spiritual needs met. It's become more about “me” than “we”. But Jesus redefined family as being more than a bloodline. Entering into a relationship with Him means you are now part of a whole new family.

### ***Ice Breaker***

*Have you been part of a group that felt more like a family? What made the difference?*

### **Key Passage**

***46 As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. 47 Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, and they want to speak to you." 48 Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" 49 Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. 50 Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!" - Matthew 12:46-50 NLT***

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. What is Church?**

*When you hear the word “church” what image comes to mind?*

Chances are pretty good that when you hear the word church, you think of a building. But when the New Testament referred to a church, it was the ekklesia in the Greek. That is a compound word that translates, “called out of”. It refers to a gathering of people called out of their homes to an assembly. The church was not the building, but the living breathing people who gathered together. That’s why we read in the bible that the church hears, it prays, it welcomed, it sent greetings.

*41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day--about 3,000 in all. - Acts 2:41 NLT*

*In Acts 2 we see the results of Peter preaching the Gospel. What three things happened to them? If you attended the August 25<sup>th</sup> baptism in Pismo, describe what you saw that demonstrated that we are all a part of The Church that extends beyond the walls of New Life.*

On Sunday this week we held a baptism at the beach along with several other congregations on the Central Coast. Those who were baptized publicly declared their faith in Jesus. They were added to the Church. Even though we meet in various congregations, we all belong to the same Church if we believe Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave.

*What are some of the things that challenge us to feel we belong to the Church, rather than belonging to “my church”? What are your feelings towards other Christian denominations or congregations? Do they feel more like extended family or competitors? What might have shaped your view?*

## 2. Brothers and Sisters

*48 Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" 49 Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. 50 Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"  
- Matthew 12:46-50 NLT*

In Jesus’ first century culture the strongest bonds were those of your blood relatives. That was the relationship that defined who you were. But in the verses above, Jesus essentially renounced his bloodline and announced a new family line. He was redefining us at the deepest level and declaring the most intimate bond was no longer based on your parentage.

*What was the new family of Jesus based on?*

*44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity-- 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.  
- Acts 2:44-47 NLT*

*When you read the description of the early church in the book of Acts, what did they do that sounds like they embraced this new definition of family? Why is it significant that those being saved were added to them? Do you know people who are Christians but want nothing to do with “the church”? Pause to pray for friends or family who have stopped attending church altogether and are isolated from the body of Christ. Ask God for an opportunity to reconnect and create a space where they belong.*

We were never meant to be spiritual Lone Rangers (google it if you haven’t heard of the Lone Ranger). God placed us in family, and we are part of His flock. When we are lost, the Good Shepherd brings us back. When the prodigal returns to the family there is a party. But if we have been hurt or chosen isolation over relationship, we won’t receive the fullness of joy in the Christian life that God intended.

## 3. Strengthening Family Ties

If we are going to operate as a family of believers, it will take an intentional effort. The cultural norm of our day tends towards individualism, but we want to create a sense of belonging in the family of God that draws people into a relationship with God and with one another. Here are some areas where we can begin to live that out.

- *Bless One Another*

*10 Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other. - Romans 12:10 NLT*

*There are many ways we can bless others. Romans 12:10 tells us to take delight in honoring each other. What are some practical ways we can honor someone? Take a moment to bless each person in your group by telling them something good you see in them?*