

1. The Church as a Family--Ephesians 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:17; 4:17 (This is a familiar metaphor for us--one the Bible uses--the church as God's household in which we are adopted into through the work of God in Christ. We use familial language to greet one another--brother and sister. The church as a family provides us a warm and fuzzy picture of what church should be about, but let's look a little deeper into it)
2. Jesus Defines the Family (What he has to say about family and family values peeled back and considered contextually and beyond may just surprise us. As was his custom, his teaching actually subverted to a degree the commonly held cultural norms of family relationships and what God's family is supposed to look like. He sees it primarily from the kingdom perspective--as in what would a family that seeks the kingdom first be. This led him to make some rather scandalous remarks about how God defines his family)
 - a. He emphasized the children--Matthew 18:1-6; 19:13-15
 - b. He acknowledged that following him would actually divide families--Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 10:28-30; Luke 14:26-27, 33
 - c. He taught that "whoever does the will of God" is his family--Mark 3:35 (in the context of being told that his mother and brothers were looking for him)
3. (In his call for us to leave all and follow him--embedded within is a call to a new community--no longer defined or limited by familiar boundaries. Priorities are reset in this new community. It is a family unlike any other--wherein all who come to God through faith in Christ are welcome, accepted, saved, adopted, given the same Spirit and made co-heirs with Christ. This is a family not based on natural ties, but on discipleship--where the values of heaven are to be honored, practiced, taught and shared. Anyone taking stock of this family should then be able to see this new community as originating--not from this world and existing to glorify God. Now think of this familiar text within this new community context) Galatians 3:26-28 (and now listen to this **QUOTE**).
4. (So what this then say to our Levy mission statement) Building A Strong Family to the Glory of God (First it means that our family certainly includes all believers here--regardless of differences/race/gender/socio-economic status, etc. But family also means those who are single/divorced/widowed--whom perhaps we need to be more sensitive to. We are all one in Christ--brothers, sisters, moms, dads, uncles, aunts, etc. **My Story--never been around natural family but God always has provided everywhere I have been including here.** Second it also teaches us to look outside of our natural families--**which many of you are doing through adoption and fostering--** but even more to those in our church family on the fringes; barely hanging on--they are adopted sons and daughters just as we are--we are to have equal concern for them; extend to them the love of this family; and do not neglect them. So we when go about "building" this strong family we take everyone with us to the construction site--every brother, sister, mom, dad, uncle, aunt in Christ. We can't just give lip service to it in some motto. This is who we are called to be as God's family)
5. (And as a part of this family there is one dynamic and amazing promise--one that can resonate loud and clear in our cultural of broken families. Listen to Jesus in) Mark 10:28-30 (Rest assured in this family are these hundredfold blessings--just waiting on all who come to Christ and discover what his family really means)