

GROWING UP IN GOD'S FAMILY

Growing Up in God's Family

Ephesians 3:14–21



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There is one common analogy used throughout the New Testament regarding the local church. It is not a business, farm, team, school, or hospital, though those word pictures are frequently used by us to convey various dimensions of congregational life. The most often used analogy is that of a *family*. God is our *Father*; we are called His *offspring*—sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, even fellow heirs. Since this is true, it stands to reason that congregations, like families, go through definite ages and stages as they progress toward maturity. This message will help us gain an overview of where we are going. In the process, we'll discover some of the reasons and results of an interrupted growth process.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Church as a Family

- Scriptural support
- Practical significance

2. The Stages of a Family

- Birth and infancy
- Childhood and discovery
- Adolescence and immaturity
- Adulthood and maturity



Quotable

An essential part of growing in Christ includes the self-discipline of authenticity—7 days a week. In short, we don't fake it.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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A CLOSER LOOK

What's in a Name?

In his book *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Beuchner explains the inner significance of a name.

[Beuchner] is my name. It is pronounced Beekner. If somebody mispronounces it in some foolish way, I have the feeling that what's foolish is me. If somebody forgets it, I feel that it's I who am forgotten. . . . If my name were different, I would be different. When I tell somebody my name, I have given him a hold over me that he didn't have before. If he calls it out, I stop, look, and listen whether I want to or not.

In the book of Exodus, God tells Moses that [His] name is Yahweh, and God hasn't had a peaceful moment since.¹

God wants us to call out His name, but He doesn't want us to trample it underfoot. According to the fourth commandment:

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7 NASB)

Because He is our Father, we must bear His name with honor. When we exhibit spiritual maturity, we hold His name up high. But when we stumble into a pit of sin, we drag His divine name through the mud with us.

What's in a name? In the Lord's name, there's a universe of love and power and justice. So, “whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17 NASB).



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LET'S LIVE IT

As members of God's family, we each must make a commitment to spiritual growth which begins with an honest assessment of ourselves. Take a closer look at the following questions to help begin that evaluation.

- Identification: At which stage am I?
- Change: What action is necessary to dislodge me from my present stage and accelerate my growth to maturity? (Am I struggling with a menacing sin? Am I holding on to a habit that is dishonoring to the Lord? Do my friends and those I consistently join with support or hinder my desire to honor the Lord?)
- Urgency: When is the best time to begin? There is no time like the present to begin the often difficult but worthwhile process of growing up in God's family. Ask the Lord to bring people and opportunities into your life that will move you along toward spiritual maturity. He will be faithful!

ENDNOTE

1. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 12.



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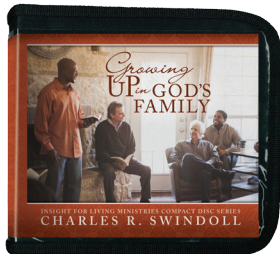
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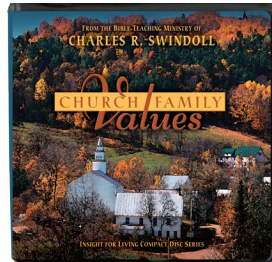
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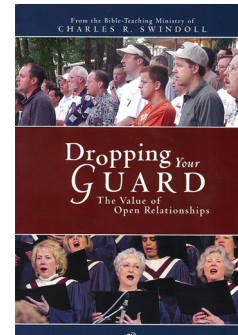
Tools for Digging Deeper



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