

INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite syndicated columnists is Dave Barry. We also have a Dave Berry, spelled with an "e" who was editor of the Tyler Paper for over twenty years. But the Dave Barry I'm quoting today lives in Miami. He turned fifty a few years ago and he listed ten things it took him fifty years to figure out. It's humorous, but also a serious list.

1. There comes a time when you should stop expecting other people to make a big deal about your birthday. That time is age 11.
2. The one thing that unites all human beings, regardless of age, gender, religion, or ethnic background, is that, deep inside, we ALL believe that we are above average drivers.
3. Never lick a steak knife.
4. You will never find anybody who can give you a clear and compelling reason why we observe daylight savings time.
5. A person, who is nice to you, but rude to a waiter, is not a nice person.
6. Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.
7. You should not confuse your career with your life.
8. People who feel the need to tell you that they have an excellent sense of humor are telling you that they have no sense of humor.
9. The main accomplishment of all organized protests is to annoy the people who are not in them.
10. Never be afraid to try something new. Remember that a lone amateur built the Ark. A large group of professionals built the Titanic.

I'm sixty-three years old, and it didn't take me fifty years to realize something revolutionary—that families matter to God; and that the most important family in the universe is the Family of God. Today, we're going to see what God's Word has to say about the Holy Family. Notice how many references there are to family members.

Hebrews 2:10-13. "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author* of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again he says, 'Here am I, and the children God has given me.'"

**the KJV version says "Captain" it's a word that means trailblazer*

I've chosen the term "Holy Family" intentionally. When most people think of the Holy Family, they think of all the wonderful art in the world that portrays the Holy Family of Mary, baby Jesus, and Joseph. A perfect example of one of these paintings is the Holy Family painted by the Spanish Master Juan Gutierrez in 1680. Baby Jesus looks completely European with a full head of blonde curls.

We sometimes overlook the fact that Jesus had a biological family. Mary was His mother, and Joseph was His stepfather. Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters. The only glimpse we have of Jesus' childhood is when He is in the Temple amazing the Temple scholars. He told Mary and Joseph, "Didn't you know that I had to be about my Father's business?" He wasn't talking about carpentry; that was Joseph's business. He was talking about the Word of God, His heavenly Father's business. After that incident when Jesus was twelve, we never hear again about Joseph. Most scholars assume he died before Jesus began his ministry at age 30.

But according to our text, the real Holy Family isn't Mary, Baby Jesus, and Joseph. The true Holy Family is the Church, the Family of God. Let's learn three exciting truths as we meet the Holy Family.

I. YOU ARE PLACED IN THE HOLY FAMILY WHEN YOU ARE BORN AGAIN

The Bible says, "Both the one who makes men (and women) holy and those who are made holy are of the same family." (2:11) Families have always mattered to God. Before He created the nation or the church, He created a family—Adam and Eve. And He told them to be fruitful and multiply.

A little girl asked her mother where she came from. Her mother said God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and they became the parents of the human race. Then she went and asked her father the same question. He told her we all come from monkeys who evolved into human beings. The little girl was confused. She went back to her mom and said, "Mom, you said that God created us and daddy says that we came from monkeys. How can you both be right?" Her mother said, "Sweetheart, that's easy. I told you about my side of the family, and your father told you about his side of the family."

When we were in school I remember taking true/false tests. I sorta' liked those because you had a 50/50 chance of getting it right. It's like a guy taking a true/false test he hadn't studied for. He told the teacher he was just going to flip a coin—heads was true and tails was false. So he went through the whole test doing that. When he finished he started flipping the coin again. The teacher said, "Why are you flipping the coin again?" He said, "Oh, I'm just checking my answers."

So let give you a statement and you decide if it's true or false. EVERY PERSON ON THE PLANET IS PART OF GOD'S FAMILY. True or false?

A. FALSE: Every human being is a part of the Family of God

Jesus said there are two Fathers and two families. He said these words to the Pharisees, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire." (John 8:44)

In our age of ultra-inclusion, there is a popular false teaching that claims everyone on the planet is part of the family of God. Unitarians and liberal theologians teach this belief.

But it is also just a part of our popular culture. In 1947 Gene Autry made this claim in his famous Christmas song, "Here Comes Santa Claus." The third verse says: "Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus; right down Santa Claus lane; He doesn't care if you're rich or poor: He loves you just the same; Santa knows we're all God's children; And that makes everything right; So fill your heart with Christmas cheer; 'Cause Santa Claus comes tonight." Sorry, Santa, you may be a jolly old elf, but you're a poor theologian. The Bible never teaches that we're all God's children.

To say we're all God's children is an attractive, tolerant way to speak about people today, but it's not in the Bible. We are all part of the family of mankind, but we aren't all part of the family of God. We are all God's creatures (created by God), and God loves everyone and wants them to be saved, but *only* those who put their faith in Jesus Christ become His children. So here's the truth:

B. TRUE: When you receive Jesus, you become a child of God

The Bible says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:12-13)

How do you join God's Family? Think about it, there are only three ways you can join a biological family. You can be born into it. You can be adopted into a family. Or you can marry into a family. The Bible teaches that we enter God's family in the same three ways. We read where John wrote that those who received Jesus were given the power to become children of God, born of God. In John 3 Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again to see the Kingdom of Heaven. We enter God's family through a new birth.

When you were born the first time, you were born into the wrong family. That's why you need to be born again. And when you receive Jesus as your Savior you experience a new birth into God's family.

The second way you join a family is through adoption. When you're adopted a family has chosen you. And the Bible says that God has chosen us to be a part of His family. "You received the Spirit of adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15) The usual word for "Father" in the Bible was *pater*. That's the formal word, but when Jesus talked to God, He called Him *Abba*, which means "Daddy" or "Papa." And the Holy Spirit allows us to cry out to God in this intimate way. You can call the Creator of the Universe, "Papa."

The third way you enter a family is by marrying into it. And this picture is also found in the New Testament. The Church is called the Bride of Christ and Jesus loves us like husband loves his wife. Paul makes it clear when he wrote, "I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." (2 Corinthians 11:2)

So, you might not have a great biological family or you might be a part of the most loving, wonderful biological family in history. It's different for different people. But you should praise

God today that Jesus has placed you in the most important family in the universe, the Holy Family of God. Isn't that good?

II. MEMBERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY GET TO SING WITH JESUS

This verse refers to Jesus fulfilling Psalm 22: Jesus is speaking in the first person: "I will declare your name [God's name] to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." (2:12)

Did you know that we have a singing Savior? Maybe you've never thought about it. Jesus sang during His earthly ministry and according to this verse. He's still singing.

Both Matthew and Mark write that after the Last Supper that Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives? What did they sing? The Psalm usually sung after the Passover Meal was Psalm 118. The Jews still sing it after their Passover Meal. So just imagine that you're there in the upper room. Jesus knows that He is headed to Gethsemane, then to be arrested, tortured and crucified. Listen as they sing these words: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done. The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad!"

God invented music. He loves to be praised. The Lord Himself is the sweet singer of salvation. The prophet Zephaniah described Him with these words in a promise to Jerusalem: "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17)

Jesus is still singing in His church. He says, "I will praise God in the presence of the congregation" He uses the word *ekklesia*, which means church. The word church appears only one other time in Hebrews. Jesus says, "In the presence of the church [that's us] He will sing praises to God."

Did you know Jesus is here in the person of the Holy Spirit singing with us? My all time favorite movie is "Braveheart." The main character is William Wallace, whose wife, Murron, is executed by an English Lord. Wallace led the Scottish rebellion against the evil King Edward I. He was arrested and condemned to die for treason. I've got to admit that I can't help but cry every time I watch the ending of the movie. William Wallace is being tortured in London. All he has to do is declare his loyalty to the King and he will receive a quick, merciful death. But he's a rather stubborn Scotsman. As he's being tortured the camera pans through the crowd and there are a couple of his soldiers wearing hoods watching his execution. And then just before he dies he sees a vision of his wife Murron in the crowd watching him. She smiles and he smiles at her as he axe falls and he dies. If that doesn't get to you, you have a cold, cold heart.

Every time we gather to worship, we should be aware of a holy presence among us, singing with us. Declaring the praises of God. And as we sing, He smiles, and we should smile and let our voices join with His in lifting up the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

A worship leader was commenting on this passage and he wrote: "As a worship leader, I confess my spiritual bipolarity--great services send me into euphoria; ho-hum services make me miserable. Worse yet, bad services make me feel like there's something wrong between God and me. But the good news about our bad worship is that Jesus worships for us. He didn't just worship (past tense) for us, though that is remarkable enough. He worships (present tense), in real time, in our midst. And God the Father, through the power of the Spirit, sees Him...among us, through us, around us, and in us...and He loves it and revels in it. What freeing news. This means that whether I had a good Sunday or bad Sunday, Jesus was there, making it the best Sunday, every time. Because of Jesus, God the Father loves my worship."

III. MEMBERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY FIND LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE

The writer of Hebrews describes the dependence we place on God. "I will put my trust in him." (2:13) Through the years I've heard people say that they love Jesus, but they don't care to be a part of a church. That's an impossibility. That's like saying you love to swim, but you don't like water. I think one of the reasons some people reject the church is they don't understand the true nature of the church. They think of the church as an organization, like PTA or AARP. The church isn't an organization; it is a living organism. The church isn't an institution like a university or a government; it's a family.

Everybody needs a family. Whether you're young, old, single or married, you need a family. Loneliness is the reason why many people are desperate. Consider all the popular songs about loneliness. Roy Orbison sang, "Only the lonely know the way I feel tonight." Elvis crooned, "Are you lonesome tonight?" Hank Williams sang, "I'm so lonesome I could cry." And the Beatles sang, "Ah, look at all the lonely people." Someone said cities are just places where thousands of people can be lonely together.

The church isn't perfect, but we follow a perfect Savior. There's no such thing as a perfect biological family, and there's no such thing as a perfect church. Someone has said that a family is like a brownie. It's mostly sweet, but there are usually a few nuts.

A Sunday School teacher was speaking to a group of children about the things money can't buy. The teacher said, "Money can't buy laughter and money can't buy love." To drive this point home the teacher asked the children, "What would you do if I offered you \$1,000 not to love your mother and father?" There was silence for a moment, and one little boy raised his hand and asked, "How much would you pay me not to love my big sister?"

You might have grown up in a small family, or a large family. You might have come from a blended family or a broken family, but we all understand the meaning of the word, "family." You and I are spiritual siblings because we have the same Father. And the church is where God puts lonely people together to share love and acceptance. The Bible says, "His name is the

Lord...a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows...God sets the lonely in families." (Psalm 68:4-6)

The Global Church is one BIG happy family. We have about 2.5 billion brothers and sisters around the world, and Christianity is the fastest growing faith in the world. There is great power in numbers. All by ourselves, we're not much, but when we join with our brothers and sisters we become a powerful force.

There is power in numbers. A few years ago *Reader's Digest* published a joke about a hunter in Africa walking through the jungle. He came upon a huge dead rhinoceros. Standing next to the slain rhinoceros was a native African. The hunter asked, "Did you kill that rhino?" The African said, "Yes, I killed it with my club." The astonished hunter said, "Wow, how big is your club?" The African said, "There are about two hundred of us." There is power in numbers.

If you are part of God's Holy Family, you should be thankful for the love and acceptance you can give and receive. But I have an assignment for you. I want you to open your eyes and look around you. Look in your family and in your neighborhood. Who do you know who needs to be a part of God's holy family?

People are hungering for love and acceptance. In Japan, there is a business that rents family members to lonely people. I read an article recently that said: "Elderly Japanese who are isolated from their children by the frantic pace of modern life can rent a 'family' for lunch or a few hours. Just call a number and ask for a son, daughter, grandchild, whatever relative you want, and that type will show up at your door and greet you as if they haven't seen you in years. Of course the service isn't cheap: three hours with your family cost \$1,130, plus transportation. Satsuki Ohiwa founded the business in 1990 when, as a businesswoman, she was too busy to visit her mother. Company staff visited her instead, and Ohiwa deemed it a success. Ohiwa's observation of her customers is not surprising. She said, 'What is common about our clients is that they are thirsty for human love.'"

That's not just true in Japan; it's true in East Texas.

If you are part of God's Holy Family you are blessed. But don't be selfish with that blessing. Invite others to join God's Family.

Repeat after me: I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God! I've been washed in the fountain! Cleansed by His blood. Joint heirs with Jesus as I travel this sod; for I'm part of the family; the Holy Family of God!

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OPEN YOUR EYES!

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David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes