

Four men are in the hospital waiting room because their wives are having babies. A nurse approaches the first guy and says, "Congratulations! You're the father of twins." "That's odd," answers the man. "I work for the Minnesota Twins!" A nurse then yells the second man, "Congratulations! You're the father of triplets!" "That's weird," answers the second man. "I work for the 3M company!" A nurse goes up to the third man saying, "Congratulations! You're the father of quadruplets." "That's strange," he answers. "I work for the Four Seasons hotel!" The last man begins groaning and banging his head against the wall. "What's wrong?" the others ask. "I work for 7 Up!"

Let's pray

Family/ Promises

Last week we talked about God's splendor and all the different forms of creation that God made for us. When we look at the beauty that surround us, we find great pleasure and it helps with getting away from things. We also talked about how much pleasure we get from using our gifts and talents.

This week I want to do an experiment. (Say some people's names), did I get your attention?

Most of us love it when someone says our name. (Unless it's our complete name). What about when someone who loves you calls you by your special name. Dad, Mom or maybe Sweetheart, Babe. We all use people's names to get their attention and when we hear our name, our attention shifts. Think about how many times a child will say your name before you finally give in. You heard them the first time. My grandkids will say mom or dad over and over. When our children want us, they'll repeat it as many times as it takes. All of the splendors of God and all of our talents are temporal but, "Love is for all eternity". Our children or spouses take life to a much higher level. They give meaning to us. We will do anything to protect them and they are our true earthly measure of love. Today is about family and about God's love. We've talked about adoption and how we're all adopted by God.

Romans 8;14 **14** For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15** The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[f] And by him we cry, "Abba,[g] Father."

Galatians repeats this and in 4;4-5 **6** Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba,[c] Father." **7** So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

2 Corinthians 6;18 **18** And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." [e]

1 John 3;1 **3** See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

This week, I've been thinking about the different relationships we have in your lives.

Spouses, children, grandchildren, best friends, co-workers, neighbors and church families are just a few. Some of these relationships are very close and some we keep at a distance. I think the best example of an unconditional relationship is between a child and a parent. Our closest relationships help with grasping what God's LOVE can be like.

No matter what goes on around us, our family will always come first. 1 Corinthians 13, is referred to many as the love chapter. It shows God's character of love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 **13** If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.**2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing. **4** Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Then in verse **13** And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

God wants us to know that He is our Father and that nothing compares to His LOVE.

In John 10:10 Jesus says **9** I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. God wants us to live life abundantly. Our prayer life's are the best way for staying in God's presence. Things like worry, injustice, hate and judging are all things that pull us away from God. Instead of drawing us nearer to Him they seem to push us away. Satan loves it when we view God as an angry God or a God who allows bad things to happen. When we choose to keep our eyes focused on God, it helps with making the pain less crippling. In many sermons, I've talked about becoming like a child and I'd like to explore this some more. Think about a child between the ages of 2 & 7. How much do they depend on mom and dad? How much do they talk to us? Everything they learn is from mom and dad. As they get older and as our children grow, they don't need mom and dad as much. Now they have to use what they've learned. When they're little, they

need us a lot. They want us, they call out our names. We all grow and it's natural for us to become less needing of our parents but, we still depend on them to be at our side. Once a child reaches the teenage years, forget it. Parents know nothing. Jeff Allen puts it this way (comedy). When we become adults, we start our own families. In many occasions, as parents, we don't feel like we hear from our children enough and we have to wait for them to want us around. It doesn't mean that we're not loved, we never stop desiring to hear from them. Think about when you look at your phone. Just seeing their name lifts your spirits. Hearing their voice and catching up with what's been going on in their lives, is nice. As children of God, Is this how God feels? This is what our prayers do for God? Could you imagine God looking at caller ID and saying, "awe man", I don't want to talk to them. In 1 Thessalonian's 5 it tells us to **16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.** If we believe that Christ came to save us and believe that we're adopted by God, then when we pray, we're telling God that we're making Him important to us. Walking with God or depending on God is how we let God into our lives. If we don't dial the phone, God has to wait. Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus tells us **7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!** This is a promise from Jesus. God wants to give us good things. It makes me think about all the times that my mom and dad did things that I didn't expect. My oldest daughter is a great example. When she was in college and I went to visit her, she needed some money. I asked her how much and she wouldn't say. She said whatever I wanted to give her. Later, we got in a conversation about why she didn't tell me how much she wanted. She said; if she doesn't say how much, I give her more than she would have asked for. My mom and dad did the same for me. As we mature and as we become adult children of God, we seem to become less dependent on God. Drawing near to God is the only way to find His comfort in times of trouble. God desires that we come to Him like a little child. A little child has a pure relationship with their parent. Nothing is too small in life. A child always wants to learn and they want to be led through things. As a parent, our desire is to give unconditional "LOVE". Because we live in a very negative time, it's hard to find good. God will never change and God never wants us to be alone. He wants us to call out His name! God rejoices when one of His children come to Him. It's just like how much it means to us when a loved one wants to hear our voice. At Wednesday's board meeting I asked the board if they would support a vision to become known as a praying church. As I listened to their thoughts, it was great to hear how well it was received. I loved the way one person responded. They simply said, "why not, it only makes sense". In order for us to attain this reputation, we need to live it out better. All of us are at different spots in life and we all have different comfort zones. Seeing God as the Father of love is a great start. Just like becoming a child again. We need to be willing to draw closer to Him. Picture a healthy relationship between a child and a parent. This is what living for Christ can be like. Yesterday, Trish and I had all of our children and grandchildren around us at the same time. This doesn't happen often. The internal joy and the love for our family is so awesome.

Heaven is when God gets to have this. Prayer is how we can let God know we want Him.

In closing I would like to share Eph 3:20 & 21 **20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**