

Gospel Centered | Mission Focused

And pointing to his disciples, [Jesus] said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"

Matthew 12:49

Matthew's Gospel | Week of January 17

Our invitation this New Year is to live gospel centered lives, encouraged and equipped by our gospel centered relationships (especially in Connect Groups). The questions below are designed specifically for Connect Groups and can also be used in households or spiritual friendships. Make a goal this week to hear at least one other person's story of how they began with Jesus.

Gospel Centered

Read Matthew 1

Matthew 1 begins with "an account of the origin of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham ..." (Mt. 1:1).

If the story of your life were to begin the same way, who are the key people that would be listed and why in your family history?

John's gospel presented Jesus as "with God" and emphasized the divine side of Jesus "divine family" relationship to God as Father and Jesus as the Son of God. Matthew's gospel begins with the human family origin of Jesus.

Based on what you know about the BIG Story of the Bible, why does it matter to trace Jesus' family line all the way back to Abraham?

Pastor Laurie's sermon suggested that Jesus' life is good news for all of our families because Jesus' "salvation from sins" (Mt. 1:21) includes transforming the beauty and brokenness in our families.

In your family relationships right now where do you need the power of the good news in broken places? (Many of us in Seattle are unmarried and have friendships that are our family relationships – if that is your story talk about those relationships!).

Mission Focused

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

Last week we read in John 1 that "to all who received [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave them power to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12). In Matthew 12:49-50 Jesus points to his disciples and says, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

What does this suggest about family when it comes to Jesus' mission?

In our West Side family, what would it look like to join in with Jesus' vision and mission focus – to be a "family on mission"?

In Ephesians 3:15 Paul prays to the Father, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." This week in your own prayer times try praying both for your own family and for others using Paul's prayer in these verses – believing God can do 'more than we ask or even imagine'! Next week in Connect group we'll talk about what you notice after praying this way.

Gospel Practice | Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an essential for our families to be transformed by the good news of Jesus, who longs to reconcile our relationships. The cross makes a new way forward for the failures, unyielding conflicts and stuck places in our marriages, our homes, our families of origin and – yes – even our church family!

Praying Forgiveness

Dedicate some of your daily prayer time to seeking forgiveness, both for your own sins against others and for the grace to forgive their sins against you. Here is a simple prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, into my soul.
Show me my sins,
both the wrong that I did
and the good I failed to do.
Give me the grace
to forgive and seek forgiveness
in Jesus' name.
Amen*

Practicing Forgiveness (5 to Forgive)

If you live with a spouse or family, what if you ended each day with 5 minutes for forgiveness? It is pretty easy to roll along with life without ever being intentional about forgiving each other and the hurts can pile up. Two simple questions: "Will you please forgive me for..." and "Is there something I said and did, or didn't say and do, that I can ask to be forgiven?". This can be super awkward at first!

Remember, the goal of a 5 to forgive time is not to "make a plan to do better." This is a time to all admit before Jesus that we hurt each other and to ask Jesus to forgive us and help us to forgive each other. The gospel turns our hearts to the places we need Jesus to go to work because we have failed.

When this "5 to forgive" practice becomes a daily habit you may notice where some hurts just keep happening, and then a plan for "walking in forgiveness" is needed. Your Connect Group or a trusted friend may help with this. A trained Counselor is also a great choice to get help on those places of chronic hurt in relationships.

Readings

The readings this week focus on forgiveness & family in Matthew's gospel. They may be a good starting place for that "5 to forgive" daily practice!

Monday, January 18 | Matthew 6:12-15

Tuesday, January 19 | Matthew 7:1-5

Wednesday, January 20 | Matthew 9:1-6

Thursday, January 21 | Matthew 12:46-50

Friday, January 22 | Matthew 18:21-35

Saturday, January 23 | Matthew 11:25-30

THE
BIG
STORY