

# Our Growing Church Family

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Our families are vital to our lives and have had tremendous influence on us. We are all shaped and molded by the experiences we have had while growing up in our families and by the families we ourselves have established. Our church family is no different in that it has a tremendous impact on our lives now and ultimately our eternal home. Our church family here at Karns has grown quite a bit over the past few years and God has greatly blessed us. But how has our church family affected our lives? Are we growing spiritually stronger and closer?

God loves families. He created the physical family by instituting marriage between a man and a woman, designing it to be for life (Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:9). He thus provided the ideal arrangement into which children may be born and in which they may mature. His love for family even extends to broken families as He is a father of the fatherless and a defender of widows (Psa. 68:5). He also created the spiritual family. He offers Himself as a loving Father (1 John 3:1-2) and provides a wonderful Elder Brother for our salvation (Heb. 2:9-13). He sent His Spirit so we could be born into this family (Titus 3:4-7; Rom. 8:15-17). He revealed His Word so we can be born again (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22-25). He designed the church to be an extended family with many mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters (Mark 10:29-30; 1 Tim. 3:15). Indeed, God loves families!

Do we properly understand family and fellowship in the Lord's church? Our first century Christian brothers and sisters understood that fellowship was a natural result of the teachings of Christ. The kingdom consists of those who love both God and their brethren (Mark 12:28-34). Thus, the fellowship we are to enjoy in the church is both with God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20) and fellow Christians (cf. Ephesians 2:14-16).

There are several ways family intimacy should permeate our church life. In our relationship with each other we are to be more like children by not striving for dominance over each other. We need to be as concerned with the one who strays as we are with the one who continues in the fellowship (Matt. 18:10-14). When forgiving one another, keep in mind that God's forgiveness is affected by forgiveness of our brethren (Matt. 18:23-35). In our service to each other we are to be like Christ who came to serve (Matt. 20:25-28).

To build family intimacy in the church we need to spend more time with each other. For some, it may mean being more faithful about attending the services of the church and becoming more involved in the work. For others, it may mean widening our circle of fellowship to include others. For all of us, it means being more willing to become involved with the concerns of others!

Are we each doing our part to see that the church is fulfilling its design to be "An Intimate Family!"? Brethren, let's all work harder at being the kind of family God desires and experience one of the greatest blessings found in Christ! May God continue to bless us with growth in numbers and more importantly, may we continue to grow in spiritual maturity.

For the Elders (Gregg Woodall)