

**Treasures from Our Heritage: God Builds Relationships
God Gives us Families; God Builds His Own Community
Ephesians 2
By Bob Young**

Introduction

- Have you considered God as a community? God is a community, he is a plural. This is theological foundation for our study.
- God puts us in relationship; through communities and in our families.
- God planned for families. A family gives support, encouragement, accountability, and love. God planned for families to love one another.
- Spiritual families, physical families
- Families give us a place to grow, establish roots, and stretch our wings
- It is through loving one another that we first come to understand the love of God.
- There is nothing more valuable than to be connected to a family who loves God.
- This forms the foundation of faith.

Illustrations

You may not be familiar with the classic story entitled *Cheaper By the Dozen* about the family exploits of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth. Two of the twelve kids wrote the book and dedicated it: "To Dad, who only reared twelve children, *and* to Mother, who reared twelve only children." Each of the 12 kids—Anne, Mary, Ernestine, Martha, Frank, Bill, Lill, Fred, Dan, Jack, Bob, Jane—was special, unique and important, to these very talented and sleep-deprived parents.

Two newlyweds are on a train heading out of Oakland on their wedding day. Holding hands as newlyweds, they begin to talk about a family. "We're going to have a wonderful life and a wonderful family, Lillie," he says. "A great big family." And she agrees. "We'll have children all over the house, from the basement to the attic." They agreed to have twelve kids. He took out a piece of paper and wrote on it: "Don't forget to have six boys and six girls." Over the next 17 years, that is exactly what they did.

Recently I read about Chuck and Penny Hower, with five children of their own they read an article in the newspaper about children with severe handicaps who needed homes. There was a shortage of families willing to provide a home for them so the Howers decided to adopt some of the children. They wanted to adopt as many as they possibly could, so over the span of 21 years, they adopted 37 children. All of them were disabled with very serious medical problems. They spend about twenty-five hundred dollars a month on groceries and that is by using coupons and buying in bulk. Meals are eaten at a twenty foot long table. Each week the family goes through 24 rolls of toilet paper, 12 boxes of cereal, 14 gallons of milk and 21 loaves of bread. Penny Hower typically does 12 loads of laundry every day. Finances have been a real challenge. They receive SSI assistance but still struggle to make ends meet. When asked: "Why did you do this?" Chuck Hower says: "There's no doubt that my life is for these children."

Why do parents have babies? For what purpose do we create someone in our own image? Why do we go through the hassle and expense of growing our families?

Being in a family helps us fulfill God's purpose and our purpose in this world

God put us here to love us and for us to love Him. That is worship. We were planned for God's pleasure.

We are formed to be a unique part of His family. Hebrews 2:10 says so specifically: *God is the one who made all things, and all things are for His glory. He wanted to have many children share His glory.* The scientific "Anthropic Principle" points to the design in the universe, intricate evidence that everything around us is carefully calibrated and designed to support human life, to make it possible for God to have a family.

Being in a family is natural

We were made for relationships

Being in a family shares glory

We were made to grow

Being in a family shares love

We were made to serve and to give to others

Conclusion

A few weeks ago, a father told me that when he became a parent, his father reminded him that parents must give their children two things: roots and wings. Give them roots to keep them grounded through tough times. Give them wings to soar above everything, explore new worlds and fly farther than we ever did.