

# A culture of family

---

<b>1. Secure connections</b>	
Teaching:	We have been born again into God's family (John 1:12, Eph 2:19). As members of a family we have security, regardless of performance (John 8:35). In the local congregation this translates into a safe space for intimate relationships, but we must be careful not to take those relationships for granted (think of all the "one another" verses). Family also has other members who are different from us (1 Co 12:14-20) – we need to learn how to relate to difference with love and honesty. All this takes place in the context of a culture (way we do things) that is unique to this congregation.
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was born for community (1 Co 12:13)</li> <li>• Family is defined by heaven (Eph 3:14-15)</li> <li>• I am strengthened by connection with people who are different from me (Eph 4:15-16)</li> <li>• I belong (Eph 4:25)</li> </ul>
Testimony:	Who here has experienced family in this local church in a significant way? What has that looked like for you?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We pursue connection with a variety of people in this congregation</li> <li>• In times of personal stress or relational discord, we push into connection with each other</li> <li>• We look for ways to love, serve and honour each other</li> </ul>
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRAY: For people whose experience of family has not been great (natural family or church family)</li> <li>• SHARE: Your experience of adapting to the specific culture of this local church family</li> <li>• BELIEVE: Add the 4 beliefs above to your daily declarations</li> </ul>
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WELL: I have been impressed how people have gone out of their way for me.</li> <li>• BADLY: I have experienced people withdrawing from me without really knowing why.</li> </ul>

## 2. Shared life

Teaching:	Family means that we get to celebrate one another's victories and share the emotional burden of one another's troubles (Ro 12:15). We are also to help one another out practically, and meet one another's needs <i>in crisis</i> (Ac 2:45, Gal 6:2), or for the incapacitated (1 Tim 5:3). But we are not spongers: each one has an ongoing responsibility to provide for themselves (Gal 6:5, 1 Tim 5:8). Family is also a place of responsibility and service – certain unglamorous jobs need to be done to keep family functioning.
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your pain is my pain; your honour is my honour (1 Co 12:26)</li><li>• My resources are for the upbuilding of the family (Gal 6:10)</li><li>• The greatest among us is the servant of all (Mk 9:35)</li></ul>
Testimony:	Does anyone have a story of being supported by a local church family beyond their wildest expectations?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We take time to rejoice and weep with each other</li><li>• We release our resources to meet one another's needs</li><li>• We gladly assume responsibilities for the sake of the family</li></ul>
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PRAY: For anyone who is currently under stress</li><li>• SHARE: The best thing that has happened to you this year. Celebrate with one another.</li><li>• BELIEVE: Add the 3 beliefs above to your daily declarations</li></ul>
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WELL: I have experienced real practical help from people</li><li>• BADLY: People seem quite self-absorbed and quick to excuse themselves</li></ul>

### 3. A growth environment

Teaching:	Families have to deal with problems along the way, but the main purpose of family is not fixing things but nurturing: raising up children to become parents themselves. (Eph 4:11-14) Family is the secure context in which each one of us learns to walk into our unique destiny and calling. Along the way we will make mistakes and need instruction and encouragement from others. (1 Peter 5:5)
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's OK to be wrong (Jas 3:2)</li><li>• Failure is an event not a destination (John 18:27)</li><li>• I am becoming my destiny (Phil 3:12-14)</li><li>• I grow as I open my life to mature people (Matt 10:41)</li></ul>
Testimony:	Who has been instrumental in your life in bringing you to maturity?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We exercise great patience with the honest mistakes of others</li><li>• We pursue our own destiny, not someone else's</li><li>• We seek out people who have walked our path before</li></ul>
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PRAY: For anyone who has allowed a failure to become a closed door</li><li>• SHARE: What's the most embarrassing mistake you have made in a church context?</li><li>• BELIEVE: Add the 4 beliefs above to your daily declarations</li></ul>
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WELL: I experience people as patient and encouraging</li><li>• BADLY: People seem to want to fix me all the time</li></ul>

## 4. Multigenerational

Teaching:	Family works by bringing together people from multiple generations (1 John 2:12-14). There is no junior (or senior) Holy Spirit (1 Co 12:13). Our relationships will depend on where we stand generationally: spiritual infants will need close parenting and limited freedoms and responsibilities (1 Co 13:11), while grandparents deserve respect (1 Tim 5:1). As children become adults these relationships will change (John 15:15). The goal of family is intergenerational transfer of inheritance: we pass spiritual wealth to our children (Prov 13:22), so that they start with an advantage. The younger generation needs to learn from the older (Prov 13:1), but the older must allow the younger to grow in making their own decisions (Heb 5:13-14).
Beliefs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am surrounded by a cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1)</li><li>• Age is no disqualification in the Kingdom (Ps 8:2, Ac 2:17)</li><li>• I steward an inheritance for others (2 Co 12:14-15)</li><li>• Grey hair is a sign of glory (Prov 20:29)</li></ul>
Testimony:	Who here has a story of being ministered to by a little child, or by an elderly person?
Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We honour previous generations for the battles they fought and the victories they won</li><li>• We bless the next generation to thrive in a changed world</li><li>• We love to bring generations together</li></ul>
Activation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PRAY: For one another for a revelation of the inheritance that we carry</li><li>• SHARE: What do you know of the history of this church family?</li><li>• BELIEVE: Add the 4 beliefs above to your daily declarations</li></ul>
How are we doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WELL: I have been deeply ministered to by someone of a very different age.</li><li>• BADLY: I don't really have any close relationships with people outside my own age group.</li></ul>