

Who is my family?

By Jean LaRosa

Several years ago, my husband got interested in researching his family tree. He joined Ancestry and got me a gift membership for a Christmas gift. My immediate family is small, and my parents' generation has mostly passed away, so I was motivated to find more distant family members that I could perhaps establish relationships with. I've now contacted quite a few people identified as DNA matches. Some of them never responded, but others were open to corresponding, and one has become a good friend.

I discovered a second cousin who is almost exactly my age. Our fathers were first cousins but drifted apart, and we never knew about each other before connecting through Ancestry. We now make it a point to get together every year. My life has been enriched by getting to know her. In addition to our common ancestry, we discovered that we share a common faith in Christ, which makes our friendship an even richer blessing.

Another time I was browsing a list of possible relatives and came across a name I recognized. I discovered that someone in my community was a distant cousin. This was a person I didn't especially get on with, although I didn't really know him well. He just didn't seem like my type of person. I didn't agree with his stands on some local issues, and suspected we were on opposite sides of the fence politically. He wasn't especially friendly toward me either. But the funny thing is, our previous coolness evaporated once we knew we were related. Now when we see each other around town, we greet one another enthusiastically, because we are cousins. I still don't agree with his politics, but I see him differently now. We now know that we have something in common—a common ancestor five generations ago.

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Kids 5-Day Club



“Who is my family?,” continued...

And that seems to have made all the difference in how we relate to one another.

This minor transformation got me wondering about what Jesus said about family. There was one incident described in Matthew 12:42-50 where Jesus seemed to prioritize His relationship with His disciples over His relationship with His earthly family. *While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to Him. Someone told Him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

Sometimes I get discouraged about the state of Christianity in the United States, and all the ideological divisions that have probably always existed but seem to have become more pronounced over the last several years. Between politics, social and cultural issues, and the response to the pandemic, it has been easy to lose sight of what we share as believers in Christ and focus more on what divides us. It seems natural to associate more closely with those who agree with our world view and keep our distance from those with opposing views. But the twelve disciples who were closest to Jesus weren't a monolithic group. John, James, Peter, and Andrew were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector formerly in the service of the hated Roman government. One disciple was nicknamed Simon the Zealot, who might have been associated with a group known as the Zealots who wanted to overthrow Rome by force. This motley crew was not necessarily a group who shared the same outlook on the issues of the day. They probably had some interesting discussions. Yet Jesus said they were all His family, because they had a common

purpose—to do the will of His Father in heaven.

So, who is my family? Can I expand my definition of family to include not just my biological family, but the family of Jesus followers? According to the Roots of Loneliness Project, 52% of Americans reported feeling lonely at least sometimes, and 58% reported that they sometimes feel like no one knows them well. Can we create more meaningful connections within the family of believers, and perhaps make an impact on this epidemic of loneliness? Is the bond we share in Christ strong enough to help us look beyond our differences to connect with others?

One lesson I have learned from discovering my distant cousin right around the corner, is that there are benefits to being open to relationship with all kinds of people, including people I didn't think I had much in common with. It's good to be family.



Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Juanita Cherry	August 8
Barbara MacQueen	August 11
Kenneth Bills	August 13
Andrew Straubel	August 20
Tingling Sun	August 27
Joseph Herrity	August 29

Elders' Corner

By Pastor Andy Straubel

"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Thanks be to God for giving us a great 5-Day Club, this July 17-23. We had a record registration of more than thirty-three children. Each night from 7:00-8:30 pm kids gathered to sing, memorize scripture, hear Bible stories, play games, hear a missionary story, and snack on goodies. Olga Haynes, from Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), taught along with our own Elizabeth MacQueen for the entire week. Most of those who registered were new to a Christian church and were from all over the world.

Each night ended with kids playing on the playground while parents stood around and talked. What an incredible opportunity to share the love of Jesus Christ and to spread the good news. Each year this outreach grows with new and exciting challenges. Special thanks to not only Olga and Liz but also to those who helped to make this happen: our registration and advertising crew, the set-up crew, the snack team, the maintenance and cleanup crew, and those who stopped in to chat with parents. It was awesome. We couldn't have done it without you. Next year we are thinking of doing CEF during daytime hours, so stay tuned. Please continue to pray for the CEF outreach this summer. The team has twelve more clubs to do before it ends this summer.

Something else to keep before you is an end of summer picnic at my house on September 10, from 4:00-7:00 pm. It's on a Sunday, a week after Labor Day. Listen for announcements

and watch for emails containing further information. There will also be an opportunity for anyone interested in following the Lord in a Believer's Baptism. Please see Pastor Andy for additional information.

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

1 Corinthians 15:58



Pursue
righteousness, godliness,
FAITH, love, *steadfastness,*
gentleness.

1 Timothy 6:11 ESV

Save the Date! Annual Windsor Chapel Picnic

Join us for a time of fun, food and fellowship at our Annual Church Picnic at Straubels' house,
Sunday, September 10, from 4:00-7:00 pm.
Everyone is invited! Watch for more information!

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Summer...TIME

August. Oh, no! Summer is almost over.... It is a cry heard across the country as Memorial Day Weekend and July Fourth celebrations are in the rear-view mirror, and we look toward Labor Day and the beginning of a new school year. And while not everyone loves the steamy days of summer, the evaporation of what we like to think of as a “break” in our daily schedules and the return of a “back to work” mentality has most of us feeling a bit disconcerted.

Where did the summer go? I would like to suggest that it would be more profitable for us to consider our frustrations with the passing of time within the broader context of biblical and human history.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth....” So the beginning of Genesis goes. And while we often jump to God’s creation of mankind, it is worth considering that God created day and night, morning and evening, the sun, moon, and stars. When God breathes life into Adam and creates Eve from Adam’s rib, they have the rhythm of the planet and of life itself as a foundation for exercising sovereign care over creation.

But with the fall, time—like the entirety of God’s good creation—becomes distorted. Thistles and thorns make finding and growing food difficult and time consuming. The misuse of free will consumes more time in broken coordination and conflict. Time becomes a precious resource that fallen man will abuse and waste along with the rest of the resources the LORD God has provided. And now, millennia after the fall, we have become adept

at cutting time corners as we depend on fast food meals, online shopping, multi-tasking, and copious caffeine consumption as we get less and less sleep. Indeed, time is such a limited resource that Benjamin Franklin’s observations that “time is money” rings very true in our culture.

True confession: I am perpetually busy and time conscious. The white rabbit from “*Alice in Wonderland*”—Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!”—rings very true. I am usually in a hurry, and I am often running late or too close to it. I have done a good bit of pondering about my discomfort with time, which has a long history and runs deep. Beside the generic issues of the fall, I see two specific consequences that illuminate and magnify my struggles with time. The first is my brokenness and my sin-laden response to hurt and trauma in my past. I have a history of shame: not belonging, not measuring up. My fallen human response has been to try harder, to earn my place, prove my worth. Those efforts are major wastes of time, almost always leaving me with too little left for everything else. The second consequence echoes the fall itself: not only do we know both good and evil, we practice both good and evil. And so once again, the time we use to pursue the desires of our flesh, to pursue evil, leaves us with less time to do good.

But as the LORD pronounced the consequences of Adam and Eve’s fateful choice, He also promised the Messiah. The Apostle Paul proclaims an important truth in his epistle to the Romans: “*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*” (Romans 5:17). And it is in Christ that we can find our identity and value without wasting time trying to earn or prove it. And it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we

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“Summer...TIME,” continued...

can use more of our time doing good and less pursuing evil.

I often marvel at the Jesus that we see consistently depicted in the Gospel accounts of His time on earth. Jesus never rushes; He is never in a hurry. He welcomes interruptions as opportunities, and He always has time for any and all who came to Him. It is both convicting and inspiring. And it isn't just that Jesus models for us the godly use of time. By dying on our behalf, Christ—the One—earned for us our righteousness, our rightness with God and our eternal identity as heirs of heaven. We have no need to spin our time wheels trying to earn or prove our salvation. And by sending the Holy Spirit, we have the power that raised Christ from the dead living within us to turn away from the desires of the flesh.

Again, I turn to the wisdom of the Apostle Paul: *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”* (Ephesians 5:15-16). This does not mean that we rush from one ministry opportunity to another with no discernment or rest. It is, however, an invitation to accept time as a gift from the Lord, to use for His good purposes and His glory. If we are to take Paul's words to heart, we must align our perspective of time with Him and see our frustration with time as a call to grow and to grow together in faith. May we encourage one another to use our God-given gifts with wisdom as we walk toward eternity.

“I have found that it is the small everyday deed of ordinary folks that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.”

JRR Tolkien via Gandalf, *The Hobbit*

ISI Garage Giveaway

Help international students and their families experience the warmth and caring of our local community. The ISI Thirty-Ninth Annual Garage Give-Away, which will be held between 8 am and noon on Saturday, August 26, at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah, 407 Nassau Street, in Princeton, assists international students and visiting scholars by providing them with large and small items to help ease their transition to Princeton.



Donations of adult or children's bicycles (hot item), furniture, small appliances and kitchen, bath and bed needs are especially welcome.

Items needed:

pots, dishes, silverware, toasters, irons, heaters, fans, sheets, blankets, desks, dinette sets, lamps, chairs, couches, beds, bookshelves, throw rugs, bicycles (hot item)



Not accepted:

televisions, computers, monitors, toys, clothes, books, curtains

Drivers with pickups and vans and helpers are also needed. The rain date is September 9. For additional information, contact Bob Louer at (973) 462-4071 or Robert.Louer@gmail.com; or contact Carrie Louer at (407) 538-1099, Carrie.Louer@gmail.com, or Tom Taylor at (908) 406-4790 or guytmt@gmail.com.



Speeding No More

By Janet Berrill

Driving. How many of us have issues while driving? I certainly did. I knew I was an impatient driver. I would drive five to ten miles over the speed limit, depending on the road conditions. If a car in front of me was going too slowly (like doing the speed limit), I'd take the first opportunity to pass him. When approaching a red light on a multilane road, I'd check out the cars in the various lanes already stopped and pick the lane that I thought would move the fastest when the light turned green. Trucks. I do not like being behind trucks, especially at a red light. You can't see around them and they are so slow getting started. I would avoid being behind a truck at all costs. Was I a bad driver? Some might have thought so, but I didn't think I was. I was never too aggressive, nor did I do things that were dangerous or risky. I was just impatient.

A couple of years ago, God convicted me of speeding. Speeding, of course, was something I knew was against the law, but I found ways to justify it in my mind. It was Cindy Bills who said in one of her articles that she found no biblical justification for driving over the speed limit. This thought stayed with me, and I was reminded of it frequently as I drove until I finally had to submit to God and obey. I decided I would no longer drive faster than the posted speed limit.

This turned out to be a lot harder than I thought it would! As I drove, I felt like I was crawling. I had to keep checking my speedometer so that I did not go too fast because I certainly wanted to drive faster than I was. It was excruciating. That is literally the word I used to describe how I felt creeping along the road. I even had to resort to using the cruise control in a thirty-five-mph zone so that I would not go faster. It was difficult for me to change my driving habits; it took months before driving slower became the norm.

Fast forward a year. I am driving on the road and all of a sudden, I become aware that the impatience I used to feel while driving isn't there anymore. I realize I am more relaxed and not in such a hurry as I used to be. Choosing to obey God and drive

the speed limit changed me in a way I had not expected. My whole attitude toward driving had changed. Wow!

God knows that sin is bad for us. When He convicts us of a sin, it is for our benefit. He wants us to get rid of bad behavior so that we can experience a better life. Unfortunately, too often we think that we know what is best and believe that our sinful behavior is actually better for us than what God wants. That was certainly the case for me when I justified my speeding. I had great reasons to justify why going faster was better than driving the speed limit. But when I finally chose to obey God and slow down, I received so much more than I ever expected. Gone was the need to get there in a hurry, gone was the impatience with other drivers who drove the speed limit, gone was the need to be in the fastest lane. I am so much better off than I was before. (I still don't like being behind trucks, though!)

I can honestly say that I have no regrets whatsoever in having let go of any sin of which God has convicted me. In all cases, when I chose to obey God and stop committing the sin, I found that I was better off without it. So, what do I do now when God convicts me? First, I thank Him for showing it to me, for making me aware of it. I agree with Him that it is wrong and ask Him to help me not to do it anymore. I confess my weakness and ask God to change me, which He is happy to do. Then I put my new behavior into practice and continue to work on it until the old habit is broken and the new godly behavior becomes the norm.

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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