

Virtual Bible Class with Rubel Shelly

“Church as the Family of God” - 1 John 3:1

These questions are designed to help explore some of the texts and ideas raised in last Sunday’s sermon about a familiar New Testament metaphor for the church.

Unit 1 – A Pauline Text / Colossians 3:12-14

1. Rubel began with something of a qualification about the “family” metaphor. What was the point of that? How does this relate to your personal experience?
2. Even the person whose experience of family has been less than ideal likely gets the point that family is supposed to be a center of loving behaviors for its members. Look at Paul’s characterization of love in 1 Cor 13:4-7. How is this an ideal description for a church’s life?
3. What other metaphors for the church can you think of? Is one of these your favorite? Does one communicate better for you than the family imagery?
4. Do you understand why Colossians 3:12-14 – perhaps verses 15-17 as well – is a good “commissioning text” for a couple’s wedding ceremony?
5. How does the “chosen people” language of this text link Old and New Testaments? How would you envision the qualities listed here making a family’s life healthier? How do you see these qualities being lived out in the family life of the White Station Church?

Unit 2 – “That is what we are!”

1. How might one hear an “invitation” in the language of 1 John 3:1?
2. What do you think of “hospital” or “Alcoholics Anonymous” as modern-day metaphors for the church? Are you offended by either? Encouraged? Do others come to mind?
3. Do you understand why Rubel said, “I sometimes think Alcoholics Anonymous had to be created because churches had failed.” Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
4. “The church is a Christ-centered community of acceptance, accountability, and nurture where gradual spiritual transformation can take place over time.” How do you react to this description of the church that was offered in today’s video?
5. Analyze the four key terms in the descriptive statement in #4 above: acceptance, accountability, nurture, spiritual formation. Define each in your own words. Explain why each is important to those of us who are called to experience God’s love as his children.

Unit 3 – Family and Discipleship

1. Why is the church sometimes represented as a “critical” and “judgmental” place – rather than a place of safety, security, and love?
2. What are some of the barriers churches face to our sense of acceptance and security in our culture? Why was James 2:1ff introduced in this connection?
3. What is your reaction to the connection of *discipleship* to the church’s family life?
4. To be a member of God’s family is to have not only the *honor* but also the *responsibility* of bearing the family name before the watching world. Read 1 Peter 1:16. (If you have time, trace the Old Testament background to “Be holy, for I am holy” motif.)
5. The video closes by speaking of grace as a motivation to holiness. How does gratitude for the love and grace of our Heavenly Father serve as a stimulus to your discipleship?