

**“FAMILY TIES”**  
**MAY 2008**

In just a few days, I'll be welcoming some special visitors from Michigan. My two brothers, sister, and other relatives are coming to Clearwater Beach for a ten-day vacation. They are looking forward to escaping the cold and rain in the Midwest. I am looking forward to spending some quality time with family.

People who grow up in the same home or household share a deep familial bond. When Paul describes new believers, he uses the language of such ties,

*“You are no longer strangers and sojourners,  
but you are fellow citizens with the saints and  
members of the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:19)*

According to Paul, new Christians now belong to God's very own household. New Testament scholar, Walter Liefeld, explains what Paul means, “The household in ancient times was what we today might call an extended family.” Paul does not see the church as a formal institution. His understanding is that each local congregation will be a living, extended family of believers.

Paul's description of the church inspires us even today. As I look forward to spending time with my brothers and sister, I am reminded how deep the bonds of family are. We grew up in the same home or household. We share memories of family vacations, holidays, and birthday parties. How do we put such bonds into words? Perhaps Robert Frost gives us the best insight in the following well-known dialogue,

*Warren: “Home is the place where, when you have to go there,  
they have to take you in.”*

*Mary: “I should have called it something you somehow  
haven't to deserve.”*

In a healthy family, members are loved and welcomed. Families, at their best, teach us a lot about God's grace. We do not earn our way into God's household. God's arms are open to us because of divine grace, not human merit.

My brothers and sister will be making the trip from cold and cloudy Michigan to sunny Florida in just a few days. I'm looking forward to making new memories with them. As I enjoy this family fellowship, I'll remember that according to Paul this is a model for the church.

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