

The congregation: a company or a family?

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household (Ephesians 2: 19)

Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother (Mark 3:35)

It makes a difference if you see the church as a company or as a family. In a company, it is mostly about production. The best workers, with the biggest talents, are being hired. There have to be results, profits must be made. Mutual relationships are mostly about cooperation to get the job done.

A family functions totally different. In a family the focus lies on the care for each other; the love. Every family member is important and special. Everyone can participate and is a part of the family, from the smallest baby to the oldest grandfather. Not what you produce is the most important, but who you are. And you will always be a part of your family, even when you are an adult.

God calls us His family in the Bible. He calls us:

- His children (Romans 8:14-17, 1 John 3:1)
- Brothers and sisters to each other (1 John 3:16, James 2:15-17)
- Family members of Jesus; His brother, sister and mother (Mark 3:35)
- The bride of Jesus (Revelation 19:7-8)
- Members of Gods household (Ephesians 2:19)

We are also servants, slaves, kings and priests and part of the Body of Christ. These are all important names that God is giving us. But the most meaningful is, that we have become the children of God; His family.

What are the consequences for the functioning of the congregation?

Love is the core value of the congregation; love for God above all else and love for your fellow believers as for yourself

- Everyone who enters the congregation, is a part of it and is important
- Every member of the congregation is special and unique and can't be missed; no matter how young, old, weak, strong, ill, healthy that person is

- The development of the character of the church members is more important than the amount of work everybody does
- When performing all kinds of work and tasks, the understanding that we are a family stays present
- Church members who are very talented or capable of doing a lot of work, are not appreciated more than church members who can't produce so much; everyone is appreciated!
- There is mutual faithfulness and dedication towards each other. Just as you don't run away from your earthly family with no reason, so you don't just run away from the family of God.

These characteristics form a basis for the local congregations. They are a pillar on which we build our congregations. There are other important pillars, like our statement of beliefs or our devotion to Jesus. More about that later in the course.

Questions:

1. How would you like to see the mutual love in the congregation worked out practically?
2. What can go wrong when the focus lies too much on the work in the church? Can you think of a practical example?
3. What is wrong with a few people doing most of the work and the others looking at it?
4. Do you think that only very talented and/or very experienced people should do tasks? Why or why not?
5. How do you show mutual faithfulness to each other in practice?
6. How do you find the balance between working together and being together?