

“All In The Family” by Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Copies of the article below—one for each person. If your youth get WITH Magazine, this article is in the Spring 2007 issue.
- 2 Draw a large tree on dry erase board or newsprint. There should be one major branch coming out of the trunk for each student in your class, plus room for them to draw offshoots from their branch. If you have a large group, make several trees.
- 3 Bibles for everyone

FOCUS

After greeting students, ask them if anyone is feeling like “branching out” today. (sorry—bad joke.)

Tell students to choose a branch on the tree and put their name on it. Then, tell them to draw other offshoots from their branch and list the names of their **spiritual** relatives on those other branches.

Study the trees as a class. Do the students have some common spiritual relatives? How did they decide who their spiritual relatives are? Did anyone label the trunk? What name should go on the trunk?

CONNECT TO THE BIBLE STORY

Hand out copies of the story, one for each student, and ask students to read the story silently.

Discuss any elements of the story that the students want to raise.

Ask students to turn to 2 Timothy 2 and read verses 1-2. Say: *Paul is talking to Timothy about his spiritual relatives. Earlier, you listed your spiritual relatives. What have your spiritual relatives taught you?*

Continue reading verses 3-13. Talk about them. What is being taught in these verses? Ask each student to choose one or more verses and think about what it is saying specifically to them. Share and discuss with the group.

APPLY

Discuss with students:

Would you be willing to get together with some of your “spiritual relatives”?

Let’s make a list of people that would be fun to invite to join us for an evening together of food, fellowship, and talking together. Then we will invite them, plan the event, and have a good time together.

Note to leader: *Look at the March lessons on this website. Several of them are intergenerational in nature and would work for this event with spiritual relatives.*

RESPOND

Say:

I’d like to offer a closing blessing to you. It comes from words that Paul said to Timothy:

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

It’s All in the Family

By Leola Floren Gee

I thought I could do it alone.

After all, faith is a personal matter, isn’t it? I cringe when one of the religious leaders climbs onto his soapbox and hammers us with “do this” and “do that” and “blah blah blah blah blah.” Rules, rules, rules. If I want rules, I can live at home with Mom and Dad the rest of my life.

Honestly, that’s one of the reasons I found the Christ-followers appealing. Rules? Not so many. All they could talk about was the man Jesus and how much they missed him and looked forward to seeing him again. I was curious.

At first, the rumors of miracles intrigued me. His fan club said Jesus could make the lame walk and the blind see. I’m fascinated by magicians, so I said, “Tell me more.”

“Timothy, he’s not a magician,” said one of the guys. “No tricks! He really does cast out evil spirits, heal broken bones, cure diseases...”

“You talk as if he’s still around,” I interrupted. “I know about the crucifixion. Everyone knows.”

"There's more! The Romans executed him, that's true. But three days later, he rose from the dead! My uncle saw him and even spoke with him."

Right, I thought. And I suppose this real live Superman can walk on water, too.

"Yes, I believe he can. And yes, I believe he is alive. And yes, I intend to join the Christ-followers."

Was that really my mother speaking? She has always been a faithful Jew, keeping the laws as best she could. And there she was, telling me quietly, matter-of-factly, that she believed in the resurrection story and that Jesus was the Messiah.

How, I thought to myself, is she going to break it to Dad?

I'm from what you would call a "mixed" home. While my mother is a Jew, my father is a Greek, and above all things—other than my mother, of course—he prizes logic.

I could imagine his face turn to stone when my mother shared the happy news that she believed in a Jewish carpenter who could perform miracles and himself rose from the dead. Dad would call in one of his Greek physician friends before you could say "psych ward."

"Well," joked my mother, when I shared that vision, "he had better send for two doctors, because your grandmother thinks the same thing."

Mom? And Gram? I could see I was going to have to take this Jesus seriously. I studied the scriptures diligently, applying all the principles I had learned from my tutor, and I began to understand why my grandmother and my mother felt as they did about the Jewish carpenter.

As I listened more carefully to my friends who were followers, I could see the depth of their faith, and it appealed to me. If the reports were true, and I had no evidence they were not, then Jesus really claimed to be the son of God. With a bemused twinkle in his eye, my Greek father had told me the myths of the gods and goddesses from the time I was a child, but the God of my mother's Hebrew scriptures rang true. That He had sent His son to earth—and that He had died for my sins—well, that was mind blowing.

"I think...I believe," I told my mother and my grandmother, hesitantly at first. As we studied together, I became absolutely convinced, and I was determined to learn all that I could of what it meant to be a Christ-follower. That's when I learned about Paul.

Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, traveled to Syria and Cilicia for the purpose of strengthening the churches—that's what our groups of Christ-followers were called—and when they arrived in my town, I sought them out.

"I've heard of you," said Paul. "The brothers in Lystra and Iconium speak well of you. You have an excellent reputation."

Had I known what was coming next, I might have been less flattered and more nervous, but I understood the reason for his request. Paul wanted me to serve on his ministry team, but he knew that my Greek heritage would be a hindrance to some of the Jews.

"You'll need to be circumcised," he said.

Ouch, I thought.

About that...let me just say it was worth it. I found myself on a missionary journey with Paul and Silas, traveling throughout the region, honing my debate skills with Paul as my mentor and helping to strengthen the churches.

Following Christ isn't always easy, and let me tell you, and tagging along after Paul is no picnic. The guy is always getting himself thrown into jail, threatened with stoning, or shipwrecked. He'll never qualify health insurance, but he doesn't want it. He's too busy looking forward to the next life to worry about this one.

Paul is like a second father to me, and I know that he views me as a son, because he calls me his "true child in the faith."

I've told him how nervous I am about taking over responsibility for the church at Ephesus. I'm young, and I'm somewhat inexperienced, and caring for a new church is an awesome responsibility. I'm not sure I can handle it.

"You can handle it," Paul told me.

He promised to write. I hope he remembers.

Post Script

Paul remembered. After his first encounter with Timothy, as recorded in Acts 16:1, he invited him along on the second missionary journey. Timothy must have gained plenty of first-hand experience as he assisted Paul and Silas and others as they guided and encouraged the growing church. As you review the book of Acts, you will see Timothy's name pop up periodically (Acts 17:15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4).

Farther along in the New Testament, you will find two letters that Paul addressed to Timothy, whose responsibilities included oversight of the work in Ephesus. It was an important job for a young man, and Paul's detailed instructions to Timothy, recorded in I and II Timothy, indicate challenges regarding church organization, false teaching, dangers of running a church, finances, and numerous other issues. No matter how much Timothy had learned, and no matter how great his responsibilities, neither he nor Paul forgot where it all started. Paul wrote: "I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well" (II Tim. 1:5, NIV).

The church is not a building; the church is people who follow Christ. If you follow Him, you are a part of the church that includes Timothy, Lois, Eunice, Paul, Silas, and every other Christian named in the Bible, as well as those who are unnamed. Curious about those spiritual relatives? Begin with the Book of Acts. It's time you got to know your family.