

FAMILY

A nuclear family consists of a mother, father, and their biological or adoptive descendants. It is often called the traditional family. This is the kind of family that Noah had. Heb. 11:7 states that he built an ark to save his family. According to the Bible that family consisted of eight people - Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives (Gen. 7:7; 1 Pet. 3:20).

The traditional family continued after the flood. Noah's sons had children by their wives and by means of these families the earth was repopulated. This information is found in Gen. 10. The word "families" is found five times in this chapter in the KJV. It comes from the Hebrew word "mishpachah" which is translated as "clans" in the NIV. A man and a woman got married and formed a family. A cluster of families became a clan, and a cluster of clans became a tribe, and a cluster of tribes became a nation. This family system was an integral part of God's plan for all nations.

God promised Abraham, as you know, that in him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Again, the same Hebrew word for "family" or "clan" was used. God obviously intended for all little babies to be born into nurturing and caring families.

Family records were so important that they became a part of the Holy Bible. There are many genealogical lists in the Bible. The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles, for example, are all genealogies. The N.T. Scriptures begin with the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1). The genealogy of Jesus is also found in Lk. 3. The existence of these genealogies bears testimony to the stability of the family. In a committed family relationship you know exactly who your father is, who your grandfather is, etc. Without the family you're not sure.

Jesus not only had a family with genealogical roots, He also had a caring and nurturing family around him during his earthly ministry. You remember, I'm sure, that **Mary** the mother of Jesus and **Elizabeth** the mother of John the Bapt. were relatives (Lk. 1:36). Remember also that when Jesus was 12 years old his parents lost track of Him coming home from Jerusalem. Immediately they began searching for Him among their "**relatives and friends**" (Lk. 2:44). During His earthly ministry His family cared so much that they tried to take charge of Him (Mk. 3:21). When Jesus was dying on the cross, His mother was there, but she was not alone. Among that small group of faithful disciples was her sister, **Mary the wife of Clopas** (John 19:25). This woman is thought by many Bible scholars to also be the mother of **James the less**, one of the 12 apostles.

The Bible lists many "households" that were converted to Christ: **Cornelius** (Acts 10); **Lydia** and the **Philippian Jailer** (Acts 16); **Aristobulus** (Rom. 16:10); **Narcissus** (Rom. 16:11); **Stephanus** (1 Cor. 1:16); **Caesar** (Phil. 4:22); **Onesiphorus** (2 Tim. 4:19).

Paul the Apostle also had a number of family members in the church: **Andronicus and Junias** who were in Christ before he was (Rom. 16:7); **Herodian** (Rom. 16:11); **Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater** (Rom. 16:21). When over 40 Jews vowed not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul, he was rescued from death by the **son of Paul's sister** (Acts 23:16).

Barnabas also had a family in the church. He was a Levite from Cyprus and apparently a man of considerable wealth as he sold a field and gave the money to the apostles (Acts 4:37). His aunt **Mary** lived in Jerusalem and owned a home where the early church met for prayer (Acts 12:12). Her son **John Mark** traveled with Barnabas on missionary journeys (Acts 13:5; 15:39). When Paul was in prison he wrote that Mark, cousin to Barnabas, was with him (Col. 4:10).

When **Andrew** met Jesus for the first time the Scriptures record: "**The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (John 1:41-42).**" How beautiful! How absolutely beautiful! Would God that each and every one of us would be like Andrew. When we meet Jesus let us go immediately to the members of our family and share with them the good news.

Remember that Noah built an ark to save his family (Heb. 11:7). If we are to be like Noah then nothing would be too expensive or difficult or time consuming for us to save our families.