

This week we begin a series of studies on the Family of God. As Dr. Baucom said last week in his State of Union sermon, 2007 is the Year of the Family for Columbia.

1. What/who is a family? Who's in yours?

Do you have some "favorites" (maybe a cousin or an aunt), and some you're not so fond of, or that you're distant from – maybe a "goofy" aunt or somebody you've had great disagreement with?

We are, of course, born into a family we're related to by blood. But we also make some choices about who will be family to us. Who's in your chosen family?

2. **Read and reflect on Galatians 3:26-29.** What do these verses tell you about how you get into God's family?

How do you get into Columbia's family? Last week, Dr. Baucom talked about Columbia's unique embrace of people. Have you experienced that? If not, do you want to? What would it take for you to be a part of our family?

3. In the Old Testament, Abraham is the revered ancestor, through whom God said he would make a great nation. Read Genesis 22:17-18. What does it mean to be Abraham's seed, according to these verses?

What does it mean according to the Galatians verses you read above?

4. **Read Ephesians 2:11-22.** Sit and reflect with this text for several minutes. Paul refers to the differences between Jews (Israel) and Gentiles.

- What makes us citizens of Israel, heirs to the promise to Israel and Abraham?
- Paul talks about Christ being our peace, the peace between Jews and Gentiles. What does that mean to you?

4. **Look again at the verses in Galatians 3:26-29.** Paul says we are all one in Christ – no distinctions. Not so long ago, many churches made a distinction between black and white. What distinctions do we still make today? How do we embrace people who look/act/think differently from us?

What do you think God thinks of the lines we draw about who's in and who's out of the family of God?

5. During the State of our Union address, Dr. Baucom talked about needing to circumcise our hearts.

- Read Genesis 17:1-14, where God establishes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham. This is the origin of physical circumcision.
- Compare Jeremiah 4:4, where God says to circumcise your hearts. What does it mean to circumcise your heart?
- How can the church body at Columbia circumcise its heart? How does this tie in to being part of the family of God?

Monday, the Nation remembers the dream of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who reminded the world that one day *everyone* will join hands in unity. Talk with your Ignition Group about how you can help facilitate Dr. King's dream of uniting the family of God. Have you told your story of being in the family? Pray about whom you could introduce to the family of God at Columbia, and thank God that, in America, *everyone* has the freedom to do just that.