

We Are All Family

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When my family emigrated from Belize to Calgary, we left many things behind but we brought books. A few years before we left, my parents had purchased the entire set of World Book Encyclopedia copyright 1973 complete with the World Atlas and World Dictionary divided in two hefty volumes: A to K and L to Z!

When I moved away from home, I took the set with me and they have a prominent place in my home office.

I pulled out the A to K volume and looked up the word, family.

Here's what I read: 1. a father, mother, and their children 2. the children of a father and mother 3. a group of people living in the same house 4. all of a person's relatives 5. a group of related people, tribe

Hmm, none of these definitions describes my family. How about yours?

Well, next I consulted Dictionary.com here's what I found:

1. A basic, social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not
2. A social unit consisting of one or more adults together with the children they care for
3. The children of one person or one couple collectively
4. The spouse and children of one person
5. Any group of people closely related by blood or marriage, as parents, children, uncles, aunts and cousins

When I think about my family, there isn't a dictionary definition that describes us. When we lived in Belize, we were a family of five-ish; my

parents, my grandma, my brother Kevin, and me. My Dad had a son before he married my Mom so we were a family of five-ish. My brother Alfred didn't live with us but he visited us often. He eventually moved to Los Angeles, California where he still resides today. He had five children and at this time he is the grandfather of eight!

My sister Michelle was one year old when we moved from Belize to Calgary and then we became a family of six-ish. My maternal grandmother lived with us throughout our childhood and after we moved away from home she continued to live with my parents.

After my mom passed away, and after 40 years of living together, I remember teasing my Dad and my grandma that they were finally moving away from home.

This year, my husband Dale and I celebrated our silver wedding anniversary. We are a family of two-ish: besides our nieces and nephews, there are all of my students and all of Dale's athletes.

I went back to the dictionary and I read words that go along with family: in the family way, family allowance, family Bible, family circle, family court, family doctor, familygram (US a radio message from home to a navy man who is at sea on a long patrol) familyish (displaying strong family ties, closely united as family) family man, family meeting, family name (the last name of all the members of a certain family; surname) family room, family-size, family skeleton, family-style (appealing to or suitable for a family), and lastly family tree (a diagram showing the relationships and descent of all the members and ancestors of a family; genealogical chart. All the members of a family line.

After reading these words I was surprised that family get-togethers was not included. It's certainly a phrase we use often in our family. I have planned and attended many family get-togethers over the years with many more to come, I'm sure.

Considering all the meanings, phrases and words involving family, I thought about not only the family I was born into but all the families I belong to through adoption: there's my church family, my work family, my track family, my book club family and all my friends who are family.

The letter to the Ephesians describes our inclusion in the family of God. It explains that God chose us and that God's grace extends to all people in all times. The author uses the metaphor of adoption to help us understand how much God cares for humanity. Adoption in the family of God includes an inheritance of eternal life with God.

Take a moment to experience the very powerful feeling of being a child of God and adopted in God's family.

What does it mean to be family? In the dictionary there's no mention of love, support, growth, change and transformation.

Having something in common, being a part of something, a feeling of belonging, no need to impress, you can just be yourself and you are accepted simply for being!

There's something about seeing and being in the presence of another family member—instantly erases tension, and fear to find love and acceptance.

I am a member of my work family when I teach and learn alongside my colleagues; when we support our students and each other. This year during in person learning and online learning, one of my colleagues took time off to spend with her partner as he suffered from a rare type of cancer. She was comforted by text messages, email, phone calls and walks with her colleagues. We collected over a thousand dollars' worth of food gift cards so she wouldn't have to worry about that as she took care of her loved one. She was overcome with gratitude by this gesture...that's what family does. Sadly, her partner lost his life to cancer. Since we couldn't meet in person for his memorial service, we

supported staff members by covering their classes so they could attend virtually.

I am a member of my track family when we run beside each other, encourage each other cheer for each other and represent Canada together.

I am a member of my book club family when share our favorite parts of a novel, when we talk about our lives and the connections we have with the books and to each other as we enjoy a beverage or two!

I am a member of my church family when I sit beside you in the balcony or on the Zoom screen. I am a member of my church family when I sing beside you in the choir, serve on a committee with you, read and discuss books with you in book study. I am a member of my church family when I feel the love and support of your prayers and when we pray together for others. I am a member of my church family when we help others in the wider community and around the world.

God's grace is lavished on me, on all of us, and on all creation in God's family. Amen!