

WHO ARE WE III?

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The question of who we really are as the church has a multi-faceted answer. One facet is this: The church is the family of God. This is based on 1 Timothy 3:14-15 which says, *“These things I write to you, although I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living god, the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

We first note that the passage says “house” and not “family.” Upon examination and study we find that the word translated “house” (oikos in Greek) can mean a number of related things. It can mean a mere building, a physical dwelling place. It can mean the place where a human resides, the body itself. It can mean a large building of any sort. But it can also mean “household” in the sense of a family. How may we know what the meaning might be in each instance? The context provides the answer.

In the case of 1 Timothy 3:14-15 the context is clear. In 3:4 and following the word is used about a qualified elder who would rule “his own house well, having his children in submission, with all reverence.” Here it is easily seen that something like the physical building is not the meaning...it is the man’s family that he is to lead. The same word is used in the same way about the deacons and their families (3:12). So it is the case that in the verses just before 3:14-15, the word “house” is used in the sense of “family.” So then we understand correctly that the church is the family of God.

This is a good thing. Everyone understands what it means to be part of a good family. Families have all kinds of folks in them, all ages, abilities and personalities. But they are, when properly constituted and led, ruled by a common love and concern for each other. This is the hallmark of family. It can and should be the place where you find peace, hope and love. It is the place where folks expect you to behave, but will always give you another chance if you’ll straighten up and fly right.

So the church is God’s family. But it is more. It is a family with an awesome responsibility. Our text tells us that it is the “pillar and ground of the truth.” It is the support and foundation of the truth. Who are we, indeed? We are God’s family, a family with a message. And that message is the truth of and about Jesus Christ (John 8:32).