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Title: The Pearson Family: The People We Choose

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Text: [Ephesians 4:1-7](#)

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[Watch the service.](#)



This is Us Scene: The Wedding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POxvWUpuF6s&t=259s>

Today we begin a four-week worship series that we are calling Family Values. What comes to mind for you when you hear the term family values? There have been a lot of different meanings to that term, some helpful, some profound, and frankly, some toxic, unhealthy, and oppressive. We see and experience all kinds of family arrangements and we have various definitions of who we consider to be family.

We have been given different expressions of family through television shows. Over these next four weeks, we are going to pair the words of scripture with four different television families in order to discover values for our relationships with those we consider family and beyond. We are going to explore the places that television and theology meet. That's what family values at their best do- they guide our relationships and interaction with others both within our family and outside of our family.

The clip we viewed is from the Pearson family of the NBC show *This is Us*. The show follows Jack and Rebecca Pearson and their kids Kevin, Kate, and Randall. This show is unique for its time-hopping element. The show goes back and forth between the beginnings of Jack and Rebecca's relationship and them starting a family, awaiting the birth of triplets to the modern-day, where Kevin, Kate, and Randall are adults. We get to see the arc of what has happened to the kids as they have grown to be adults. In some ways, it's like watching a giant puzzle as we put the various pieces together to make sense of it all. Two of the main "twists" of the first season that shape the

narrative is the death of Jack Pearson at some point and Randall, who is adopted, meeting his birth father William and the dynamics of that relationship. The show has captured the heart of many because of the way it deals with real-life issues, issues that we deal with as well. It also captures the power of unconditional love and unconditional grace that is so central in our faith.

The letter to the Ephesians is a Pauline letter, one either written by Paul himself or by a contemporary of Paul. It's one of the latest letters, thought to be written around 60-65 AD. One of the reasons we can place it later in time is because of the shift in tone in this letter. There is a shift from the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus towards living as a Christian community and experiencing the Christian faith- how to live the life of faith and what values guide living the life of faith. It was clear that they were going to be living together for the long haul. At this point in the letter, we hear a move from theory to practice. These words are not merely ideals, but practices for a life of faith.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6 (NRSV)

Did you hear the values for living life together?

- Humility and Gentleness.
- Patience.
- Bear with one another in love.
- Maintain the unity of Spirit in a bond of peace.

These are some of the core values of living life together, the core values of being family.

We have reached the one-year mark of the first COVID case in the United States. Also this past week, we marked over 400,000 deaths from COVID. At this time last year, we could not have imagined how this last year would go.

We've been home for far more than we are used to, spending far more time with those who live in our household than we are used to. At the same time, others that we identify as family, we've not been able to spend as much time with.

The values that hold us together as a family has become more important. We've perhaps had to have more patience with one another.

You might have seen the title for this day, *The People We Choose*, from the episode of *This Is Us* called *The Wedding* that we viewed at the beginning, and thought to yourself, "I didn't choose my family." On one hand, that is true, but on the other hand, we do choose. We choose, with family, and with others, whether or not we are going to commit to being in a relationship with them. As we have spent more time together, we have needed to: be gentler with one another, show more humility in our dealings with one another, have more patience with one another, (can I get an Amen on patience) bear with one another in a spirit of love. Acknowledge that we are sometimes the hardest on those whom we love the most.

In the scene, we watched from *This is Us*, it is Kate and Toby's wedding. Kate's brothers Randall and Kevin have done a good bit of planning for this wedding. The absence of their father Jack from this family event has brought to the surface much unresolved grief. They are all anxious about the past and anxious about the future, and we see scenes during Randall's speech of future anxieties. The truth is that when we do life together, with one another, there will be ups and downs. There will be joys and sorrows. There will be moments where life comes easy and moments when life is exceedingly difficult. There will be moments when you feel like you have it all figured out and moments when it becomes very clear that you are not in control.

Randall's words are true, "Nobody knows where we will be. What we can control is the people we choose. Choosing our people is the closest we come to controlling our destiny. While everything else may change, if you choose right, your people will stay the same."

He speaks to his family, to his larger idea of family, as the people he has chosen to walk alongside him in life.

We cannot say enough about the people who walk alongside us, those who will show us gentleness, be patient with us, those who bear with us in a spirit of love. Those who extend grace to us daily. These values are what make the people we choose fundamental to living the life God has called us to live.

As some of the earliest followers of Jesus in the church at Ephesus were learning what living a life worthy of Christ looked like, these are the values they are given. And the love mentioned here, it's not an idealistic virtue, but

the unselfish concern for others that is essential not only in the life of a family but in the household of God, as siblings together in Christ.

Throughout *This is Us*, the extended Pearson family comes back to this type of love. It's love that is real, love born out of living with gentleness, humility, and patience in our relationships. It's the type of love that overcomes anything that seeks to tear us apart or do us in. In terms of the people we choose to walk alongside us, it's what makes those bonds and relationships so meaningful and crucial to living the life God calls you and me to live. It's the type of love that anchors us in healthy relationships with others and with God. It's loving others the way God loves us all.

Let Us Pray Together