

A Second Family

by Preston Pouteaux

When I left home to study I took a big step away from my family and into the great unknown. I had a few dollars in my pocket, an unreliable (but cool) Jeep, and a deep longing to learn more. I thought I was ready, so I jumped forward with both feet and I don't regret it.

Yet I learned that I was missing something. Although I had everything I thought I needed to venture out as a young man, I found that I also needed family. My own family was far away, so I found a second family in the place where I lived.

Second families are found in a number of ways. Some find them in co-workers, a club or community event, or through a parent group. When I moved to Vancouver I found my second family at a little local church. The people there welcomed me in, invited me to BBQ's, encouraged me, and helped me find my feet - they became family. For that season of life this little community replaced lost connections and in a short amount of time any sense of being homesick was covered by fast friendship and genuine care. I found myself with people of all ages, backgrounds, and passions - just like a real family. When I think of the many 'second' families I've had over the years, I remember each connection fondly.

Authors Will Miller and Glenn Sparks say that finding family not about finding a group of people who will give us something, but who will simply be with us as friends for the journey. They say, "The power of presence of those you love and to whom you belong is more important than anything in particular that they do for you or with you." A second family is a group of people who have your back by being part of your life.

Finding a second family is so helpful and, for some of us, essential if we're feeling detached or lonely. But even if everything in life is going well, there is much to be said for having a network of people who are there for you.

Many of the people in your neighbourhood may have been there for years, or perhaps they moved in only in the last few months. Healthy cities and towns often have initiatives or programs that welcome families with a gift or information package, but we know that to feel truly 'at home' it is important that we help our newcomers find their second family right where they live.

If you feel disconnected and miss the company of a distant relative or friend, take courage in knowing that the people in your city, perhaps in your own neighbourhood or right next door, may be the family you need. The Nelsons, the Pollards, the Peases, and the Kindrets have become second family to us right in our own neighbourhood of Rainbow Falls. Lake Ridge Community Church has become my second family, not only on Sundays but throughout the week. They are all people in my neighbourhood who we have come to appreciate, enjoy, trust, and love. Not only have they welcomed me, but now we turn around and welcome others because we all know how good it is to be a part of a family.

Finding a second family takes times and often happens in the passing and ordinary moments and when we least expect it. May you find yourself in the midst of a community who you can love and enjoy this year.